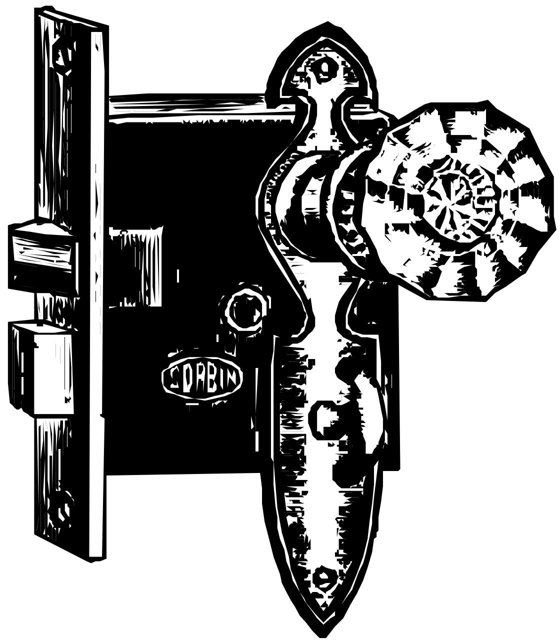
Thanks to **Tyler J. Thomas, CJIL, CMKA, CRL - Woodstock, GA** for enabling us to all see the richness of lock history through this ***P&F Corbin*** document!

-Bill Lynk



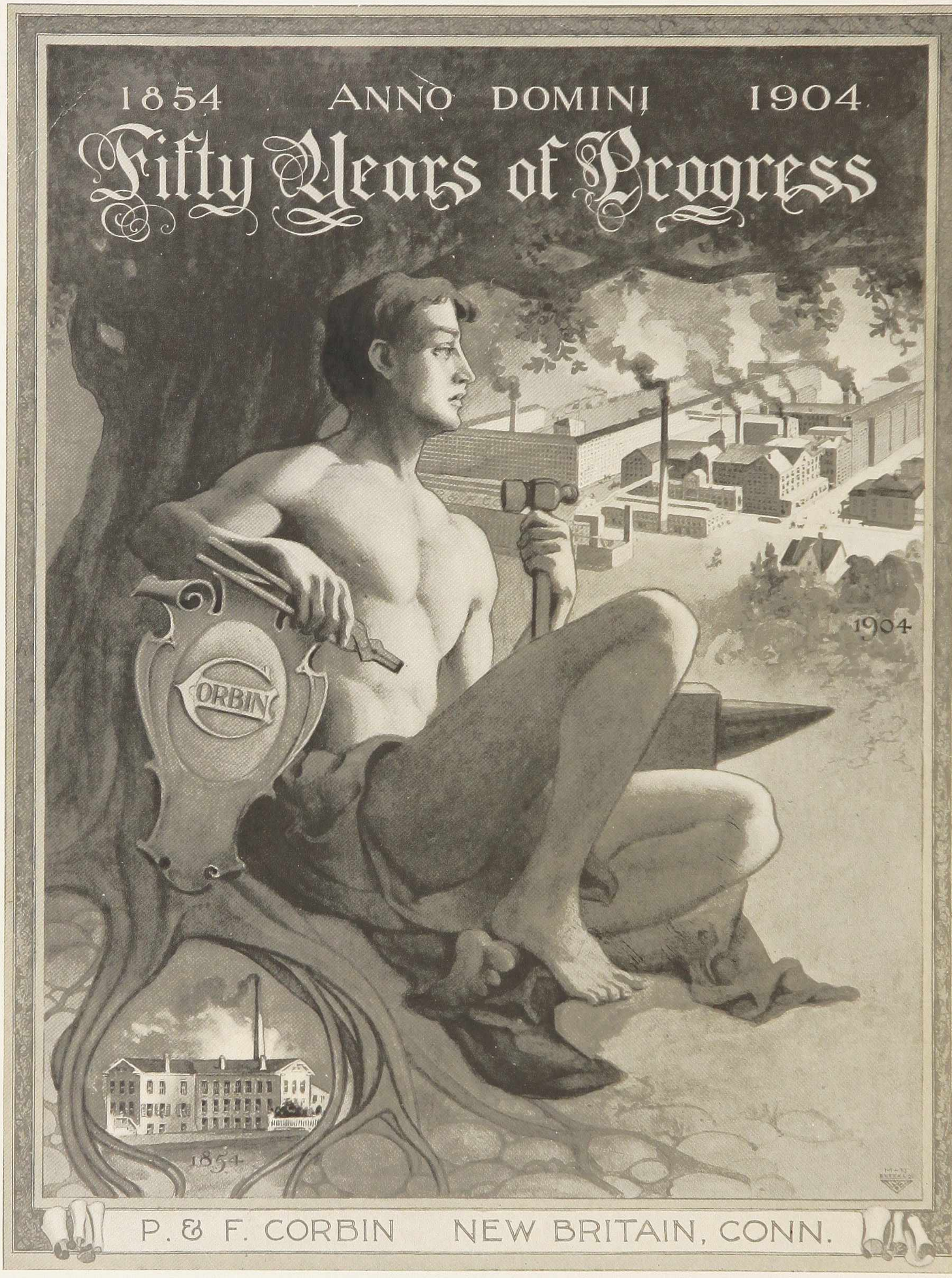
HISTORY OF THE HOUSE *of* P. & F. CORBIN

CORBIN

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HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF P. & F. CORBIN


1854 ANNO DOMINI 1904
Fifty Years of Progress
CORBIN
1904
1854
P. & F. CORBIN NEW BRITAIN, CONN.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

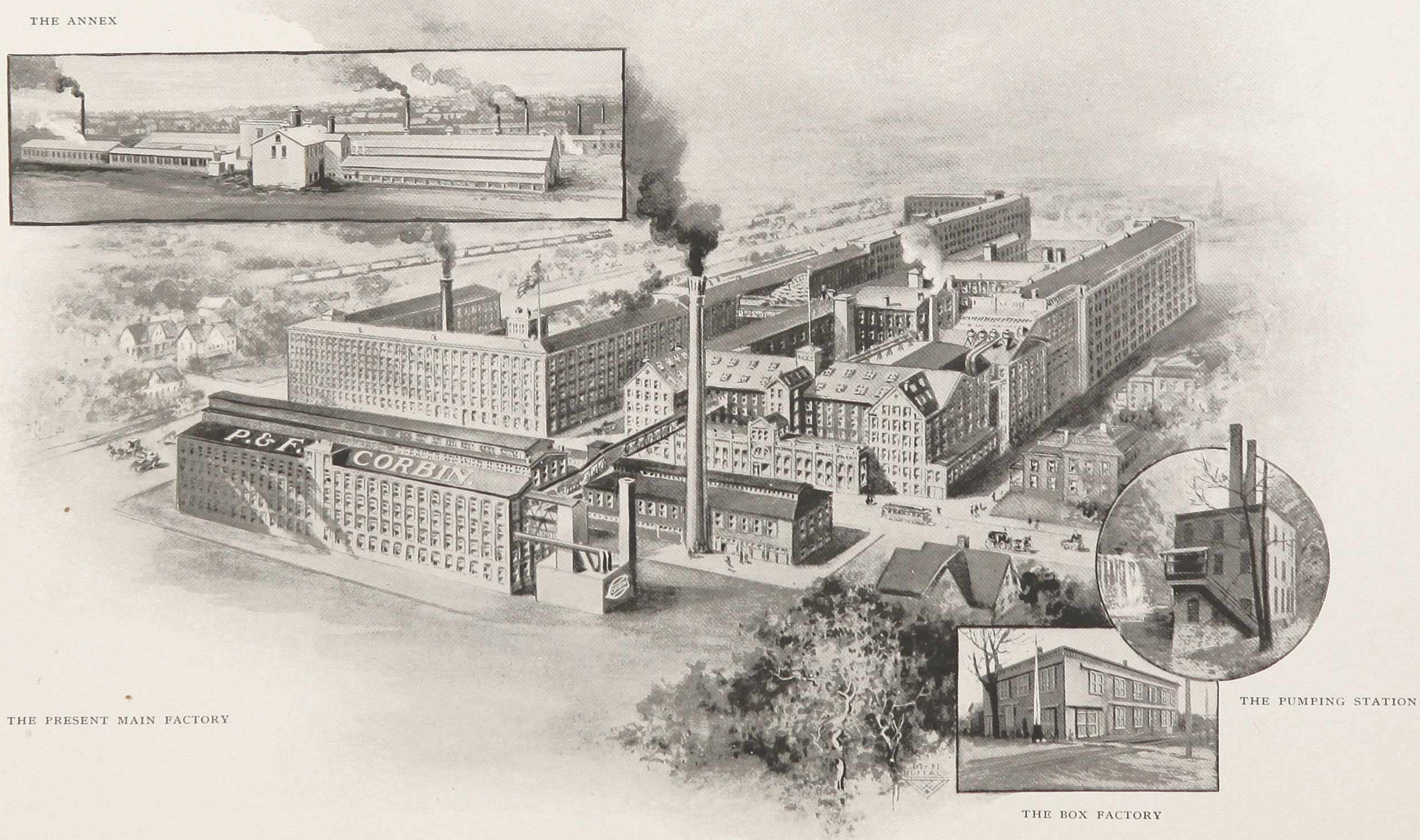
THE visible exponents of a commercial institution like that of P. & F. Corbin are the men who conduct it, the buildings that afford it a home, and the goods which it produces and which furnish the reason for its existence.

Its history naturally consists in the relation of the events in which these factors appear conjointly and the circumstances which affect them. It is this which the following pages attempt to set forth.

In writing the story the greatest difficulty has been to obey the injunction to keep in the background the personality of the men who have made the business. I have done all that I could in this direction, even to the extent of suppressing some occurrences that have had an important bearing upon the prosperity of the company and of minimizing the part in its growth and development taken by one or two of the persons who are still actively engaged in its affairs.

Yet, I trust that those who read can find between the lines that which I have not been permitted to write, and will be able to clothe the plain recital of facts and description of goods with somewhat of the living forces and personalities that have made the narrative possible.

J. B. Comstock.



PRESENT PLANT AND ANNEXES

TITLE

HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF P. & F. CORBIN

MCMIV

ILLUSTRATED: INCLUDING PORTRAITS OF MEN NOTABLY IDENTIFIED WITH THE GROWTH OF THE HOUSE

ISSUED IN COMMEMORATION OF THE *FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY* OF THE FOUNDING OF THE HOUSE *ON THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY* IN THE YEAR *EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR*

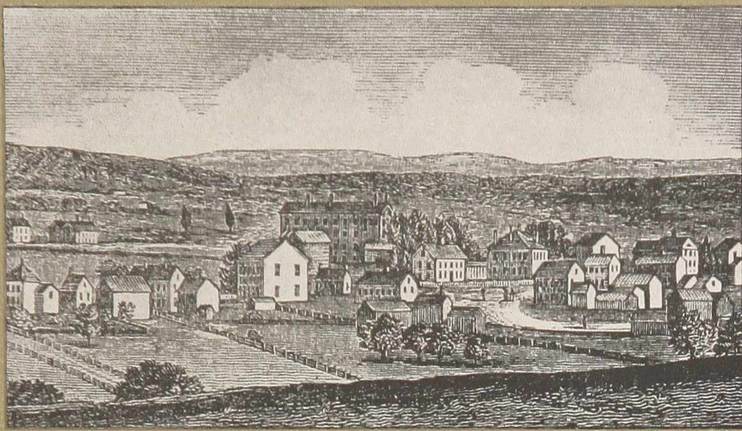
Text by
JOHN B. COMSTOCK.

Compiled by
GEORGE C. ATWELL.

Designed, Engraved, and Printed by
THE
MATTHEWS-NORTHRUP
WORKS
BUFFALO AND NEW YORK

C O N T E N T S

I L L U S T R A T I O N S



EARLY NEW BRITAIN FROM AN OLD PRINT

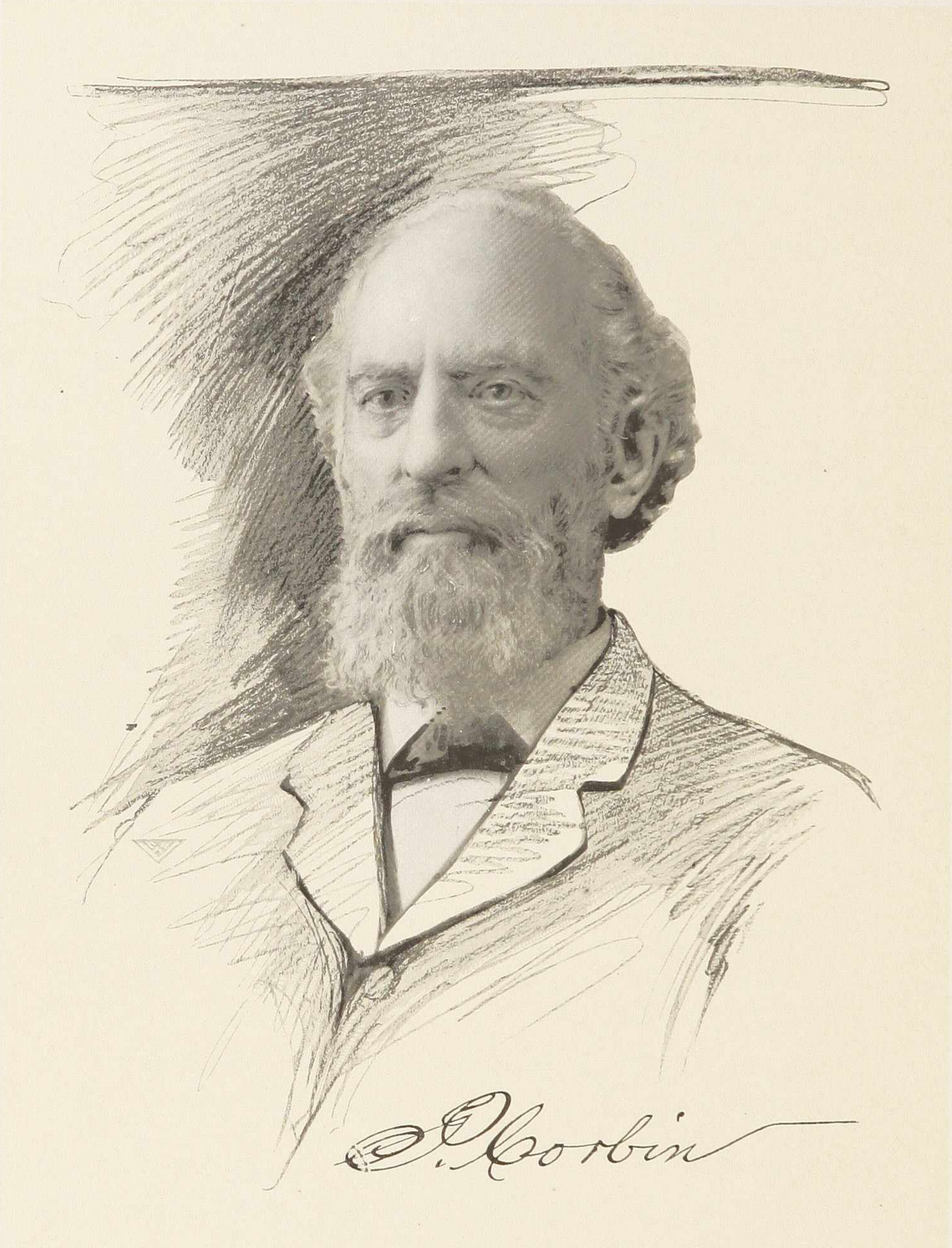
THE HOME OF THE CORBIN INDUSTRIES

NEW Britain, Connecticut, known as "The Hardware City," where the factories and general offices of P. & F. Corbin are located, was originally a part of the town of Farmington. In 1705, its people ceased to go there for worship, a new society having been formed nearer to it called the Great Swamp Society. In 1754, it gained a church of its own. In 1785, it severed its civil connection with Farmington and formed a part of the town of Berlin, incorporated at that time. In 1850, the town and borough of New Britain were incorporated. In 1870, the city was incorporated, and in 1900 it stood, on the census list, the 125th in size in the country. In 1754, its total population was about 300; in 1800, 946; in 1810, 982; in 1820, 1,000; in 1850, 3,029; in 1860, 5,385; in 1880, 13,977; in 1889, 18,500; in 1900, 28,202. To-day there are about 38,000 people within the city limits and supported by its industries, the growth of which may be fairly measured by the increase in the number of the city's inhabitants.

In 1849, at the time the history of P. & F. Corbin begins, New Britain contained less than 3,000 inhabitants and the character of the town as a manufacturing center was fairly well outlined. When the tax assessment list was made out in 1851 there were sixty-eight mercantile firms, mostly manufacturers, of which twenty-three were assessed as having invested two thousand dollars or more. There was always a rivalry between the concerns whose businesses were in any degree similar, which increased with the passage of years, and if it at times

caused no small amount of bitterness it had a reflex action for good in that it kept all concerned keenly alive to the necessity of embracing every opportunity for improvement in goods and methods. As new comers, P. & F. Corbin had the greatest amount of opposition to overcome, and the lives of those who carried the burden in the early days were made the sterner and straiter, and each departure was probably more carefully considered and more thoroughly developed than would otherwise have been the case—and the foundation of the present business was, consequently, all the more firmly and surely laid.

The enterprises were small, as we should now consider them. The heads of the houses took off their coats and lent a hand wherever it was needed. The doors of the factories were as open to all comers as is the door to the blacksmith's shop to-day. Life was less complex and if interests were less divided they were pursued with a greater intensity of purpose.



PHILIP CORBIN,
PRESIDENT

THE FOUNDER AND HEAD OF THE HOUSE OF CORBIN

HON. Philip Corbin, the founder of the commercial house of Corbin and its active manager and head from the inception to the present time, was born at Willington, Conn., on October 26, 1824, and spent there the first seven years of his life. The family is an old one, tracing the line back to Robert Corbin of Normandy. An ancestor, Geofrey Corbin, 1194, is mentioned in English history as is his descendant, Walter Corbin, 1272. In the American branch, the line traces back to Clement Corbin or Corbyn of Roxbury, Mass.; to his son John Corbin, who rendered valuable service in King Philip's war in 1675; to his son James, born in Roxbury in 1667, and one of the proprietors and original settlers of Woodstock in 1686; to his son Lemuel, born at Woodstock and afterwards a resident of Dudley, where he was tithing man in 1739, and constable in 1746; to his son Philip, a man of power and a prominent citizen of Dudley, being made successively constable, captain, selectman, and representative; to his son Philip, Junior, born at Union and afterward a resident of Willington, where his son Philip, the third of the name in direct succession and the founder of the Corbin industries, was born. He was the third of ten children, eight of whom were boys.

It is worthy of note that from the earliest known records of the family it has contained men of character, setting their impress upon the time in which they lived and leaving records of public and private service in the archives of church and state. Forceful, energetic, masterful, many of them of more than ordinary physical and mental ability, they transmitted their family characteristics to their

descendants as the histories of their lives testified. Philip Corbin was thus born with a measure of physical strength and endurance which have ably aided him in his work. The fact that he was forced by the stress of circumstances to learn to employ his powers and sense of responsibility to their full capacity when young gives a still further explanation of his successful career.

When Philip was seven years old, the family moved to Farmington, near the Unionville line, the school to which the children were sent being in the latter town. Here they lived for a year; then for six years on a farm in West Hartford, whence they went to Ellington. A year later they returned to West Hartford to the old homestead, now known as Corbin's Corners, still in the possession of the family, where Philip's father died, July 24, 1881, and where his two sisters now reside.



When the family for the second time moved to West Hartford, Philip was a strong lad of fifteen, able to do a man's work, and from this time until he reached the age of nineteen the most of his time was spent in farm work away from home, his wages being paid to his father, as was then the general custom with minors.

In addition to the education received at the district school, he had the benefit of a term and a half at the West Hartford academy. Considering his advantages, he was well informed. Indeed, at one time in this period, he had agreed to teach a school in the Stanley Quarter of New Britain, for ten dollars per month, but Augustus Stanley induced his kinsman, Noah Stanley, the selectman who had the matter in charge, to give the school to a distant relative named Carter, who offered to do the work for two dollars per month less. In the autumn of the same year his father contracted to cut one hundred and fifty cords of wood, relying upon four of the boys, Philip, Frank, Waldo, and Hezekiah, to do the work. In farm work, as in most other branches of industry, there is a pace maker or leader wherever there is a number of workers, the man who has the most energy or the greatest sense of responsibility assuming the place by natural selection. In this instance it was

Philip who set the pace and, as is usual with leaders, performed the greatest portion of the work. Axes are heavy in boyish hands, and it is easy to let an ambitious worker have a clear field for his efforts. It was Philip who finished the job alone. At this time, at the age of nineteen, he cut two cords of two-foot wood for a day's work, receiving therefor forty-five cents per cord.

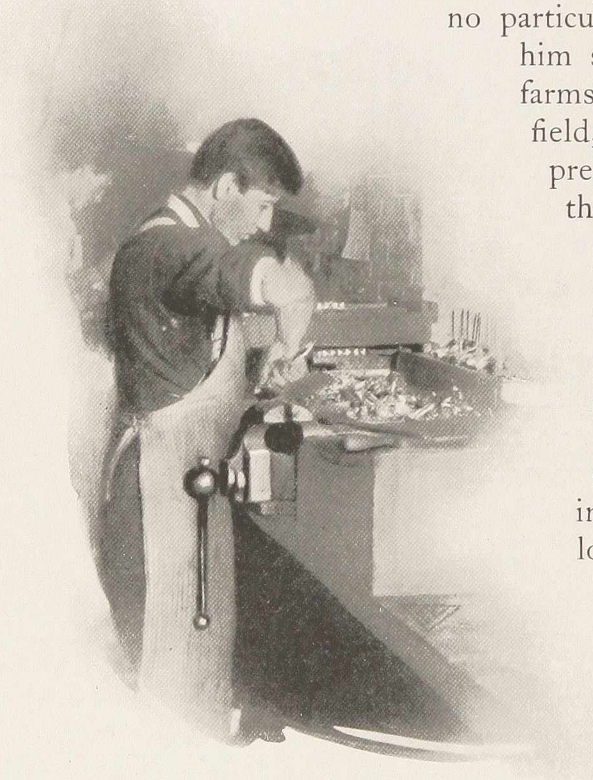
A man named Rowley passed the house one day while Philip was at work in the yard and strongly advised him to follow his example and secure a place in one of the New Britain hardware factories, saying that he could earn more money. The idea appeared to the young man to be a good one, and the longer he pondered upon it the better it seemed. It did not, however, meet with the same favor from his father, who refused to give it any consideration, saying that he had made arrangements for Philip to work for a farmer, a Mr. Elmer, at fifteen dollars per month, to lead his men. The leader of a gang of men ruled by example, and to hold his position must keep well ahead of his fellows—a task that might well dismay a boy of nineteen expected to outstrip six or seven men older than he and eager for the prestige to be gained by beating the leader. The father was anxious that Philip should take the place, for the wages were higher than those paid the regular farm hand, who got about twelve dollars per month, but Philip, fired by his new ambition and unwilling to assume the work which he felt was too hard for him, insisted so strongly upon having his way that the father finally gave a reluctant consent; and Philip went to New Britain to make a trial at the new work.

On the 18th of March, 1844, Philip Corbin began work in the shops of Matteson, Russell & Co. (afterwards Russell & Erwin), for a contractor by the name of Charles Burt, receiving fourteen dollars per month, out of which he must pay his board, and send the balance to aid in the support of the family. To add to his earnings he did whatever work he could find to do outside of the regular hours of labor; among other things, sweeping out the entire factory once a week for fifty cents. Mr. Burt released him for half a day each week in order to do the sweeping, and Philip put in more than enough overtime to offset the hours thus lost from his regular duties.

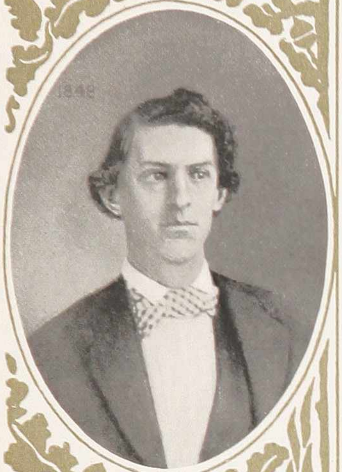
Three of the boys, Hezekiah, Waldo, and Frank, followed Philip's example, and secured work in the New Britain shops, but in the following July the boys were called home to do the haying. So eager were they to get the work done and to earn money in order that they might continue in their new work, that they put in every moment of daylight in the hay field and finished in two weeks what ordinarily required twice as long. For the remainder of the season,

some eight weeks, Philip worked for other farmers, receiving $1.50 per day, and thus giving his father as much money as though he had continued in farm work; consequently, there was no serious objection made when he went back to his work in New Britain.

In the fall of 1844, therefore, Philip Corbin returned to New Britain and went to work for Henry Andrews, who had a contract to make locks for North & Stanley, receiving nineteen dollars per month for his services. At this time his knowledge of lock making was slight, and his work for Mr. Andrews upon locks was of a general character, requiring no particular skill; but the same spirit that had made him sought as a leader among the men on the farms caused him to desire to excel in his new field, and he improved such opportunities as were presented for learning the art of lock making as then practiced. There were in those days no cast locks, these articles being made throughout of wrought metal, and very largely by hand, the use of machinery being then but imperfectly developed. To make a lock required the deft use of hand tools, some natural ability and a much more thorough knowledge of locking mechanism than is required by the ordinary lock-fitter of to-day, and to become a good lock maker was to be a skilled workman —a leader among his fellows.



In the North & Stanley shops there was a lock contractor by the name of Bucknell, who was in the habit of working in the evening, getting everything ready for his men to begin in the morning without loss of time. Philip Corbin, anxious to learn, frequently spent the evening in the old gentleman's department, helping him in his work. Mr. Bucknell, finding Philip's services of value, offered to pay him for what he did, but Philip declined to take money, saying that if he could learn to make locks he would feel repaid. Finding him thus eager to learn, Mr. Bucknell took pains to teach him, and in sixty days he not only could make a good lock,







PHILIP CORBIN AT VARIOUS AGES



but in his association with Mr. Bucknell had undoubtedly unconsciously absorbed a knowledge of the management of the workmen necessary to produce the best results.

By this time, the season for the letting of new contracts was near at hand and Mr. Bucknell suggested that Philip make a bid and endeavor to secure a contract for himself. To this Philip objected, saying that North & Stanley knew nothing of his ability as a lockmaker and would not give a contract to him, a "green country boy," as he put it.

"Put in your bid," said Mr. Bucknell, "and when they come to you just refer them to me."

So it was decided that Philip should enter a bid for a contract to make plate locks—a lock set into a wooden case or back cut out to receive it. On the morning that the bids were opened, Mr. Henry Stanley entered the shop and approaching Philip, whom he only knew as a workman in his establishment, said:

"Young man, what do you know about lock making?"

"Ask Mr. Bucknell," was Philip's reply.

Mr. Bucknell's report was so satisfactory that Philip Corbin was awarded the contract and began his career as a lock maker and employer of labor. It was unprecedented for a young man of twenty to hold such a place, but the work was done so satisfactorily that the contract was awarded him the second year without any question being raised regarding his ability to fulfill it.

At this time, Philip's brother, Frank, then seventeen years of age, came to New Britain and was received into partnership on the second contract. The two brothers continued in partnership, working under a contract for North & Stanley until May 8, 1849. Until he attained his majority, Philip sent home all his earnings except the portion required for his support, the amount being considerably in excess of anything that could have been realized as a farm hand. In the last year of his minority he gave his father fully a thousand dollars, a larger sum than the figures would represent to-day. Before he was twenty-one years old he had nineteen men in his employ and at the close of his last contract his force had grown to thirty or thirty-five.

The North & Stanley shop was operated by power derived from a brook running through the town not far from the present Corbin factories, all trace of which has entirely disappeared. In dry seasons the water failed to turn the machinery; in freshets or times of plentiful rain there was more power than was needed, and at such times it was customary to crowd the work to the fullest extent. The work which took the greatest amount of power was grinding off on emery wheels the protruding ends of the strips of iron which formed the two sides of the locks, and in the times when there was plenty of water this work was urged as much as possible. The Mr. Bucknell who gave Philip Corbin encouragement to take his first contract was now an old man, and finally had let his men go, being content to turn out only such locks as he himself could make. During one dry spell he had accumulated a large number of locks, the cases of which needed grinding, and when the succeeding heavy rains came, with the necessity for taking prompt advantage of the power, he had more grinding to do than he could accomplish. Philip, knowing the old gentleman's quandary, quietly set a number of wheels one afternoon and by working nearly all of that night finished the entire lot. When Mr. Bucknell came in the next morning he found the work done, much to his surprise and gratification, which was in nowise lessened when he learned that it was done without charge, as an expression of appreciation of past kindnesses, which Philip had thus endeavored to repay.

Philip Corbin's interest in the welfare of his employers did not stop with the limits of his contract, and he was sorely tried by what seemed to him the failure to take advantage of opportunities for improvement. North & Stanley had a pattern maker named Cook, whose work was of an inferior order; the local competitor had a fine pattern maker whose name was Pye, and whose work excited Philip Corbin's admiration. He found that Pye could be induced to transfer his services to North & Stanley and strongly urged Mr. Stanley to hire him, making some very severe criticisms of Cook's work to support his argument, one being that "he could mold a cat in the sand and draw her by the tail and make a better casting than he could with Cook's patterns." This was repeated to Cook and caused a coolness that was unpleasant, since Cook worked at the bench next to him.

At another time, he strongly advocated the purchase of an improved key machine, pressing the matter so vigorously as to draw forth a severe rebuff; and awakening him to the fact that no reform or material improvement was possible under the prevailing conditions, he at once began to plan for a change that would give him a larger measure of freedom in the execution of his ideas, and the inauguration of a new business under his own management was the logical result.

In June of 1848, he disposed of an undivided one-half interest in whatever of good and evil the future might hold for him by marrying Francina T. Whiting. She, like her husband, had been reared upon a farm and had the thorough domestic training such a home gives. The two young people faced together the trials and problems attending the starting of a new business and to her courage and devotion, her assistance and support, Mr. Corbin ascribes much of the success of the enterprise in its formative period.

The history of Philip Corbin's life from this time on is practically that of P. & F. Corbin. Throughout its entire existence he has had the active management of its affairs, just as he has it to-day. He has followed in his career the principle of placing P. & F. Corbin's interests above others that might conflict with them, and the position which the house of Corbin has attained in its field is a testimonial of his business judgment and sagacity, and of what may be achieved by a half century of advancement with a consistent, persistent, unchanging policy under the direction of one man.

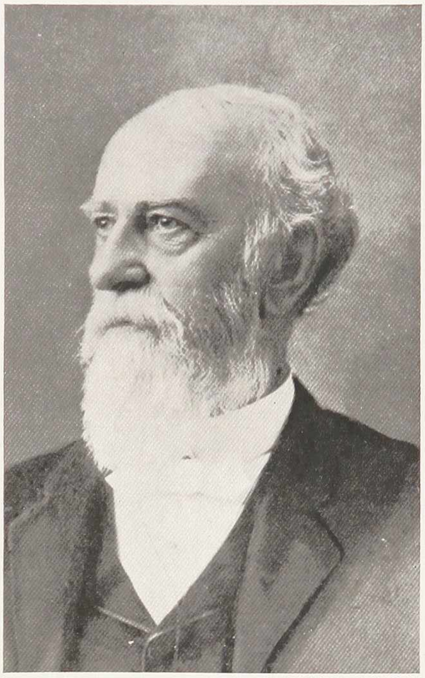
Mr. Corbin has other interests which he has assumed from time to time, when his doing so would not interfere with the demands made upon him by P. & F. Corbin. A list of the offices he occupies will best demonstrate the

variety and scope of his activities. He is president of P. & F. Corbin, the American Hardware Corporation, the Corbin Cabinet Lock Company, the New Britain Machine Company, and the Porter & Dyson Company, all of New Britain; vice-president of the New Britain Savings Bank; a director of the Hartford National Bank of Hartford, Conn., the Mechanics National Bank of New Britain, and the Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection & Insurance Co. of Hartford. He has always been identified with church work, and for a number of years has been chairman of the Society's Committee of the South Congregational Church of New Britain. He is found identified with and giving cordial support to the various plans for advancing the welfare of the community morally, socially, politically, and commercially.

A Whig in early life, he identified himself with the Republican party upon its organization, and has always taken a keen interest in civic affairs. He served as warden of the borough before the incorporation of New Britain as a town; also as a member of the city council; subsequently, as water commissioner, he supervised the enlargement of the system that has given the city its splendid water supply. He was elected to the state legislature in 1884, and in 1888 was made a member of the state senate.

1849
DOEN, CORBIN & COMPANY

IN THE summer of 1848, Philip Corbin had fully determined that he must find employment elsewhere, and he and his brother Frank, after canvassing the matter fully, took into their counsel a brass founder by the name of Edward Doen, a good workman, and skilled in all branches of his trade. After much planning it was decided to form a copartnership under the above caption and go into business for themselves. Each of the three men could furnish three hundred dollars, making a joint capital of nine hundred dollars, barely sufficient to equip a small—a very small—shop.

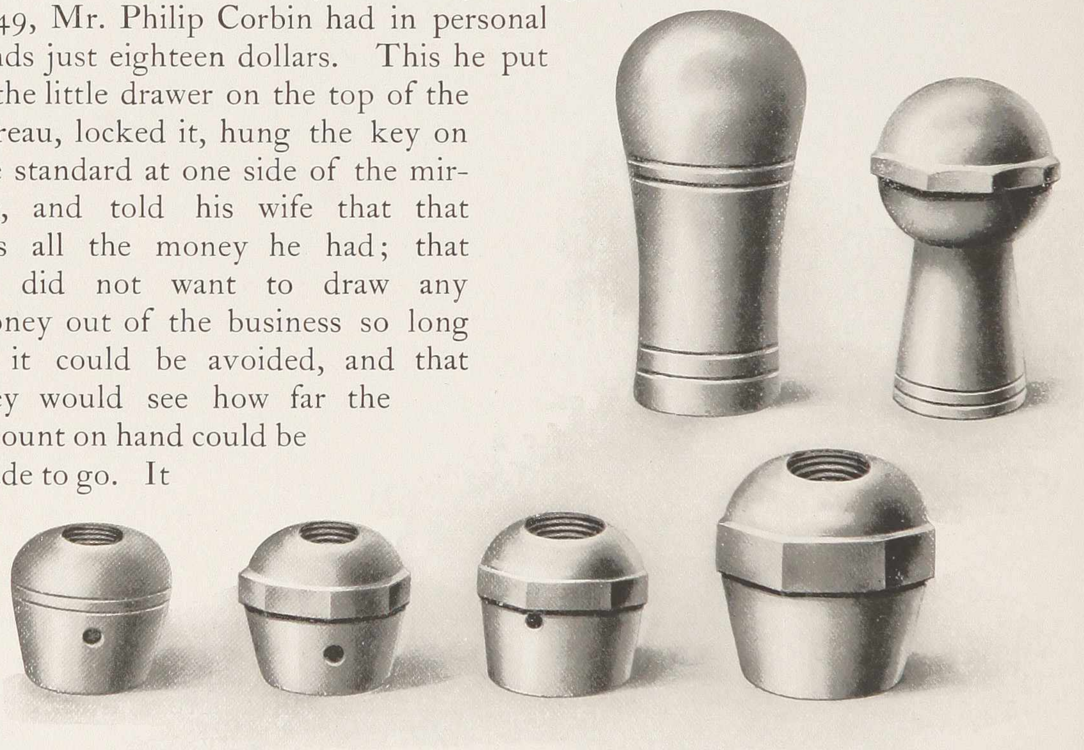

FRANK CORBIN

Land was procured in the eastern part of the town from Mr. Samuel Kelsey (a grandfather of Mrs. Philip Corbin and universally known as "Squire" Kelsey), and a contract was made with Mr. Henry W. Whiting for a two-story frame factory building, with stone foundation, and with a cellar extending under the entire building, the price for land and building being about six hundred dollars. In October, the cellar was dug and the wall was built, and Philip Corbin spent Thanksgiving Day in 1848 in banking the foundation to protect it from the winter frosts. In the following spring, the building was erected. A horse-power tread-mill which had seen some use had been contracted for in the fall before and was now installed in the cellar, and connected with the machinery, consisting of a grindstone, an emery wheel, and two lathes; a big black horse was bought to turn the machinery; two furnaces for casting (another was added a little later, when a small building was erected in the yard for a foundry) were built in the

little lean-to in the rear, and by May of 1849 the plant was ready for operations. Everything was paid for in cash, and the three partners stepped into their establishment with a factory free from incumbrance and a cash balance of somewhat less than two hundred dollars—with which to buy metal and conduct the business.

It was very evident that money must come in quickly if the new concern was to keep afloat, and to do this goods must be marketed as soon as possible. Ox balls for tipping the horns of cattle were in demand, and the partners had invented a new pattern or style which was an improvement on anything then made. A hardware merchant from an Ohio town, who was visiting a friend in Farmington, was shown one of these and at once gave a good order for them. July 4, 1849, was celebrated by Doen, Corbin & Co. by the shipment of their first bill of goods, completing the Ohio merchant's order, amounting to between two and three hundred dollars.

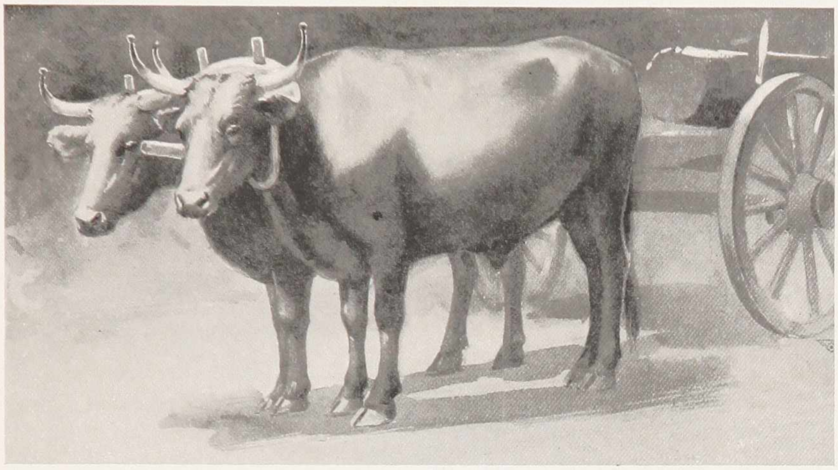
When the new factory was ready to begin business, on the first of May in 1849, Mr. Philip Corbin had in personal funds just eighteen dollars. This he put in the little drawer on the top of the bureau, locked it, hung the key on the standard at one side of the mirror, and told his wife that that was all the money he had; that he did not want to draw any money out of the business so long as it could be avoided, and that they would see how far the amount on hand could be made to go. It



OX BALLS

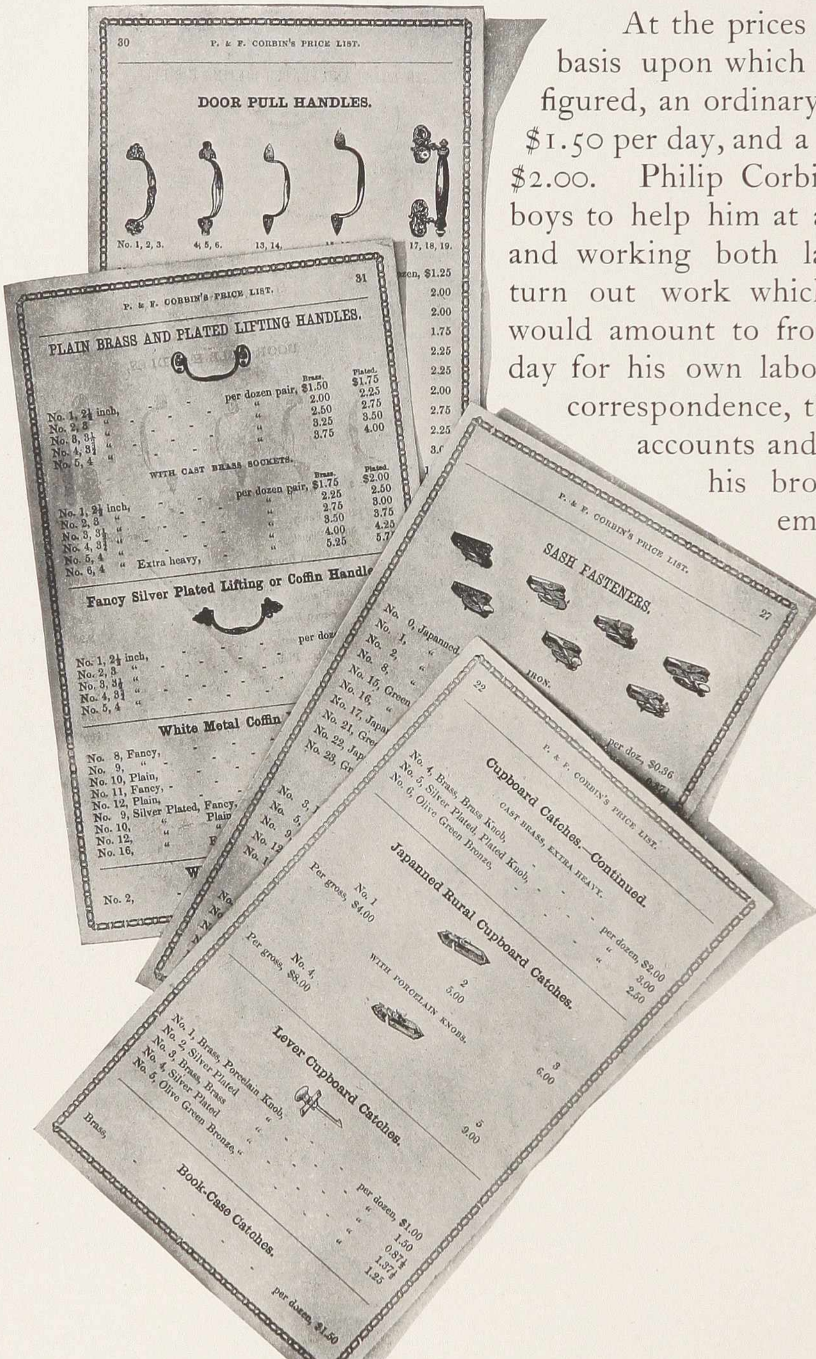
lasted for twenty months, during which time Mrs. Corbin with her own hands earned over one hundred dollars packing goods in the shop, which went towards

paying the general living expenses. They had no rent to pay; both of the young people had sufficient good clothing from their wedding outfits, and the money paid by two boarders supplied the table, with the aid of a garden, a cow, chickens, and a pig. For pleasure they had their companionship with each other and their friends and their interest in the business. They were well, and their simple, steadfast lives kept them so, and the hopes for the future, now so abundantly realized, meant more to them than any of the annoyances of the present — if indeed they gave them any consideration or suffered them to have any weight.



The three partners worked hard. Mr. Doen was an excellent and accurate workman, but not especially rapid in his movements, so the two brothers did the most of the productive work, leaving the other work for him. Philip Corbin, used to the long hours of a farm day, was wont to begin work at daylight or before — often as early as three o'clock — and by the time his helpers were ready for the day he had accomplished a goodly amount of work and had matters in shape for them to begin. A man named Samuel Goodrich was their first employee, and two boys were hired later to help in the foundry.

At the end of four months Mr. Doen grew dissatisfied. Illy-advised people persuaded him that without an engine to drive the machinery there was little chance of success. The disinclination of the Corbin brothers to assume a debt of six hundred dollars for a portable Baxter engine (which was in those days considered with favor and was a pioneer in its field) was the rock upon which the partnership split, and on September 1, 1849, Edward Doen sold his interest to Mr. Whiting, Mrs. Corbin's father, receiving in payment his three hundred dollars, with six per cent. interest for the time invested, and $1.50 per day for his time. This was good wages in those days.



At the prices for labor which formed the basis upon which the cost of the goods was figured, an ordinary brass founder could make \$1.50 per day, and a very good man could make \$2.00. Philip Corbin, however, by hiring two boys to help him at a wage of 75 cents per day and working both late and early, was able to turn out work which, after paying the boys, would amount to from six to seven dollars per day for his own labor. To him, also, fell the correspondence, the collections and care of accounts and the keeping of the ledger, his brother Frank being chiefly employed in the production of goods.

LIFTING HANDLES, ETC.
FROM OLD CATALOGUE

1849-1851
CORBIN, WHITING & COMPANY

THE first traveling salesman for the concern was Mr. Henry W. Whiting, the new partner, who had previously done some work of this kind for Doen, Corbin & Co. and made three or four trips during his connection with the firm.

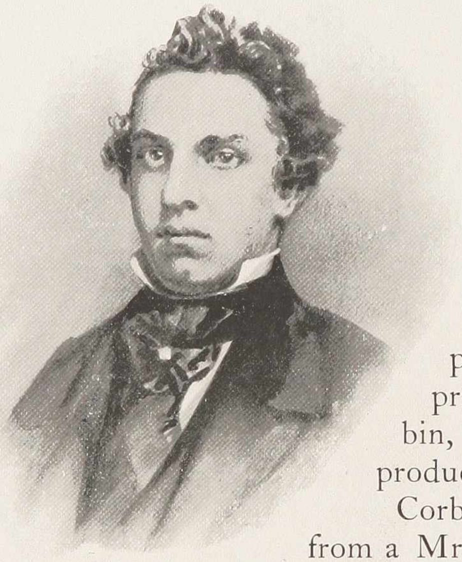
In the early years of this business goods were sold upon long time. The custom was to make settlement twice a year—in January and July—accepting in payment of accounts notes payable in four months. Customers would naturally defer making purchases until after the settlement period and then buy heavily, and the result was that on a large share of the goods almost a year's time would be given. To hasten payment, manufacturers were wont to allow a cash discount of five per cent. at settlement time, or one per cent. per month for later prepayment of the notes. There was but little money in circulation, and a quick return upon capital such as is demanded to-day was not possible. This made it correspondingly hard for a new concern with limited means to make rapid headway.

In addition, American goods were not always looked upon with favor. The domestic manufacture of hardware was in its infancy, the known brands and favored goods coming from abroad. Importers and dealers, with their shelves stocked with foreign goods for which a trade was already created, were not disposed to buy domestic wares of no general repute which would have to be sold as substitutes for the well-known importations. To make articles already manufactured in this country would be but to add to the discomfort in introducing his line, so Philip Corbin decided at the very beginning to, so far as possible, make goods not then made in America, and thus eliminate one source of competition.

At the beginning, ox balls were the principal source of revenue, but other articles were added as fast as possible. The rule of avoiding domestic competition was very generally followed. Among other things, Corbin, Whiting & Co. were the first to make lifting handles with bails or drop handles. At

this time these were imported freely and were largely used as coffin handles as well as for the regular uses to which such goods are now put. Mr. Corbin made improved jigs and tools to hold unfinished goods in process of manufacture and had the cost reduced to a figure which enabled him to undersell the foreign goods and make an attractive profit.

This coming to the ears of another firm of hardware manufacturers in the town, they determined to take up the same line, and one morning it was found that one of Corbin, Whiting & Co.'s workmen had gone, taking with him all data necessary for the production of the goods on the same basis. In order to forestall their coming competitors the price was materially reduced and large orders were taken, which filled the dealers' stocks for some time to come. When the other firm was ready to market the goods, the price was again cut, and the new competitors found to their disgust that the promised large profit in the goods did not exist. Later, the price was restored, but the rival's opinion of Corbin, Whiting & Co.'s ability to figure the cost of their product was decidedly an unfavorable one.



WILLIAM CORBIN.

Corbin, Whiting & Co. bought their casting copper from a Mr. Brainard of Hartford. At that time the use of ingot copper for casting was unknown here, the greatest source of supply being the old sheathing of vessels. The metal account at times ran for some time, as all accounts generally did, and one day, when the indebtedness had grown to about sixteen hundred dollars, Mr. Brainard appeared at the factory and asked for Philip Corbin, who confronted him with paper cap on, sleeves rolled up and covered with the grime of the little brass foundry. To him Mr. Brainard explained his errand, and was given customers' notes, not only to cover the indebtedness but to pay for more copper which would be needed soon. He left with the firm conviction that Corbin, Whiting & Co. were destined to grow and prosper, although it was made known in the course of his conversation that he had been influenced to call by the report of the rival manufacturers of lifting handles who were sure that Corbin, Whiting & Co. were not making money.

A half century ago there was much of the old Puritan spirit in Connecti-

cut, the land of the Blue Laws and of steady habits. There was much of intolerance in matters of religion, politics, society, and business, born of the sturdy, combative New England character which has wrested prosperity and wealth from a sterile land in an unfriendly climate. The new firm had its way to make against the unfriendly feeling that the presence of a possible competitor aroused. That it did not fail at this stage of its career is due to the persistence and industry of its members, the favor which the unusual excellence of its wares gained with the large dealers, and the tact and skill and rigid economy that kept the business always upon a safe basis and made failure impossible.



JOHN M. SPRING

In the fall of 1851, Mr. Whiting sold his interest in the business to the two brothers and on January 1, 1852, retired, the style of the firm being changed to P. & F. Corbin, as it has since remained. It is worthy of note that Mr. Whiting's reason for desiring to sell was his belief that the line was growing too rapidly—that too many new goods were being added instead of all the productive energy being devoted to the manufacture and sale of those already adopted. Thus the first partner left because in his opinion the Corbin policy was not progressive enough, and his successor because it was too progressive. But the same steady, consistent, conservatively-aggressive plan of action that marked the safe middle course and held to it in spite of all obstacles, that created a dollar and ten cents before it spent a dollar, governed the acts of the little concern and has perpetuated its existence.

It is also worthy of mention that the particular thing to which Mr. Whiting objected, and which led to his withdrawal, was the introduction of a line of thread escutcheons in which there was a good margin of profit and of which a full assortment from 3/8 to 3/4 inch was made. This still forms a part of the Corbin line.

At the end of this period the force had grown to six or seven men. In 1850, William Corbin entered the factory as an apprentice and made signal progress in learning the business. In 1851, John M. Spring, who was destined to play an important part in the development of the industry, first entered the factory.

The concern was rapidly gaining recognition, because of the favor with which its products were received. One of the New Britain hardware manufacturers, who was acquainted with the quality of the goods, called upon the Corbins in the latter part of 1850, with friendly intent, and suggested that they try to make an arrangement whereby another and larger New Britain hardware manufacturing house would market the Corbin product and thus save selling expenses. The advice was not received with favor, as it was thought unwise to give outsiders control of the product, since they could at any time add the same goods to their own line and leave Corbin, Whiting & Co. without a market. Their wisdom in thus keeping free from an entangling alliance was shown a few years later when their friendly advisor, who marketed his goods through this third concern, found himself without a trade connection and with his old associates aggressive competitors with a duplicate of his entire line made in their own factory.

In addition to ox balls and the lifting handles, of which mention has been made, the little catalogue issued by P. & F. Corbin in January of 1852 contains flush bolts, lamp hooks, buttons on plates, turn and trunk buttons, cupboard hooks, hat and coat hooks, hat hooks, trunk catches, spiral window springs, thread escutcheons, paste jaggers, stair-rod eyes, shutter screws, and table fasteners. In addition to the goods of their own manufacture, they bought and sold a number of styles of bolts made by Frederick T. Stanley.

Some of the goods then made are still incorporated in the Corbin line, and are standard in the trade to-day. Others have been dropped, the demand having ceased—such articles as lamp hooks for screwing into the ceiling and holding kerosene lamps suspended from wires; paste jaggers, which are now foreign to the line of goods made; picture hooks, which have been replaced by molding hooks; stair-rod eyes, which have made way for improved devices; and table catches for the old style drop-leaf table. Ox balls are still listed, principally for old association's sake, and should be held in grateful memory for the important part they played in the earliest days of the business.

1852-1854
P. & F. CORBIN — Copartnership

FROM January 1, 1852, until February 14, 1854, the business was a copartnership, carried on solely by the brothers, Philip and Frank Corbin. The line of goods received constant additions, increasing the labor of production and sale, and multiplying the anxieties and burdens of the two partners. In 1853, Frank gave up his work in the factory and thereafter spent his time upon the road selling goods. Philip also made occasional trips in order to keep in closer contact with the market and its needs, and the assortment continued to grow under his direction, while a constantly increasing number of orders taxed the little factory to its fullest capacity.

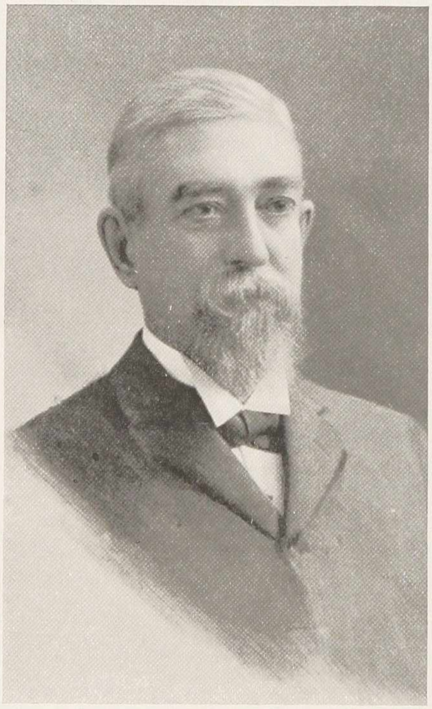
In 1852, the business had grown beyond the limits of the factory to care for it and a room was hired in the factory of North & Stanley on the site of the present west wing of the Corbin plant, where a number of lathes and emery wheels were installed and run by power furnished by the owners of the building. At first, the goods were cast in the little foundry at the old plant, hauled to the new addition to be finished and taken back to be packed and shipped, but in a short time additional room was secured in the new premises, the foundry was moved up from the old site to the rear of the new location and the first factory was abandoned.

It will be of interest to know that the original factory building, built in 1847, still stands and serves a useful purpose. It was vacant for a short time after it was abandoned as a factory, and was then remodeled as a two-family dwelling and sold to two brothers in the Corbin employ. Later, these men decided to go back to their farms and Mr. Philip Corbin bought the building from them. It remained in his possession until a few years ago, when it was again sold and is occupied by two families. The first New Britain home of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Corbin, which was located within a stone's throw of the first factory, also is still occupied.

It was in this period that three more of the Corbin brothers became identified with the business. George S. Corbin, the youngest of the brothers,

came into the shop as a boy, and was connected with P. & F. Corbin until his death. About the same time, Waldo Corbin joined his fortunes with his brothers, and in 1853, at the age of 31 years, was made a partner. In 1853, Hezekiah, the oldest of the eight boys, also came into the factory, but soon left and afterwards embarked in the manufacture of paper boxes. There was plenty for everyone to do, and the rapidly-growing business taxed the powers of all to care for it.

In 1852, Mr. Philip Corbin went upon a trip to Boston to introduce a new line of goods, neck bolts and barrel bolts, never before made in America. His sample case was two boards, with ends and side pieces and hinged at one edge to close, much after the fashion of the modern dress suit case. In this he had mounted samples of lifting handles, lamp hooks, brass bolts, and ox balls. He went into the establishment of Brooks Bros. on Dock Square, knowing that this firm dealt largely in these goods and hoping to secure their favor for his line. After some difficulty he found Mr. Brooks, who was standing on the ledge storing away goods on the shelves, and opened the case for his inspection, but after looking at them over his shoulder from his elevated position, and learning that they were made by the salesman who presented them, Mr. Brooks not only declined to give them closer inspection but announced that as he imported such goods in large quantities he did not want the home-made articles sold in that market—adding that he would send for Mr. Corbin when he wanted to see him.



GEORGE S. CORBIN

Several years later, Mr. Corbin was again in Boston upon a similar errand, carrying an assortment of samples which had grown until a trunk was required to contain them and a wagon to transport them. While he was in M. C. Warren & Co.'s store, one of Brooks Bros.' clerks approached him and asked him why he did not call upon Mr. Brooks.

"The last time I did so," replied Mr. Corbin, "he told me that when he wanted to see me again he would send for me. He has not sent for me yet."

In a few minutes the man returned with a request from Mr. Brooks for Mr. Corbin to call and bring his samples. This he did, and trade relations were established that lasted during Brooks Bros. existence.

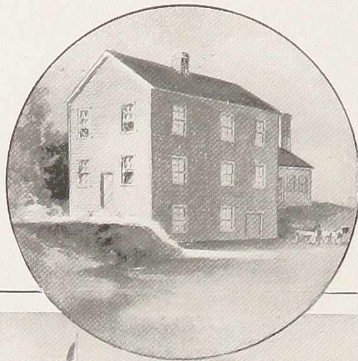
It was only natural that the importers should dislike to see their business encroached upon by the goods of domestic manufacture, for so long as the goods sold were of foreign manufacture they stood to the trade in the same relation as the domestic manufacturer does to-day. There was a fear that if goods were made at home there would be no room in the trade for the large jobber or middleman, and the case of Brooks Bros. was duplicated more than once or twice in the early experience of P. & F. Corbin. Still the goods were lower in price, were better made and in many instances showed decided improvements, and thus they made their way rapidly against foreign competition and the very limited competition at home.



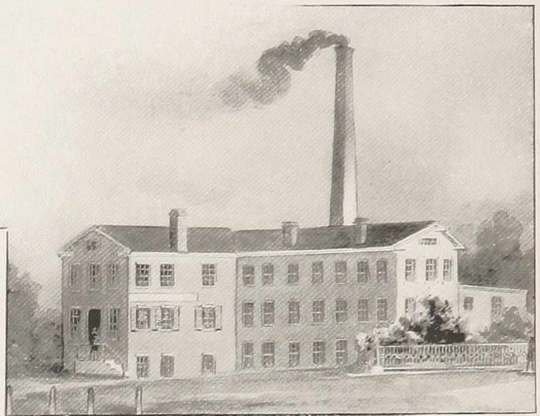
WALDO CORBIN

It became evident to the Corbin brothers that there was a much larger field than they could cover with their limited means and facilities, and that something to give a greater scope to their business should be done. At about this time one of the local manufacturers, who had learned to respect the capacity of P. & F. Corbin for the production of goods, proposed that the two concerns consolidate. When it was learned that P. & F. Corbin's identity would be lost in the proposed consolidation the proposition was not entertained, and another way was sought to secure the desired end.

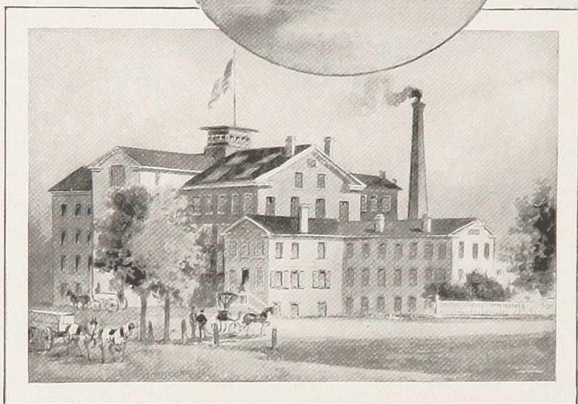
1849



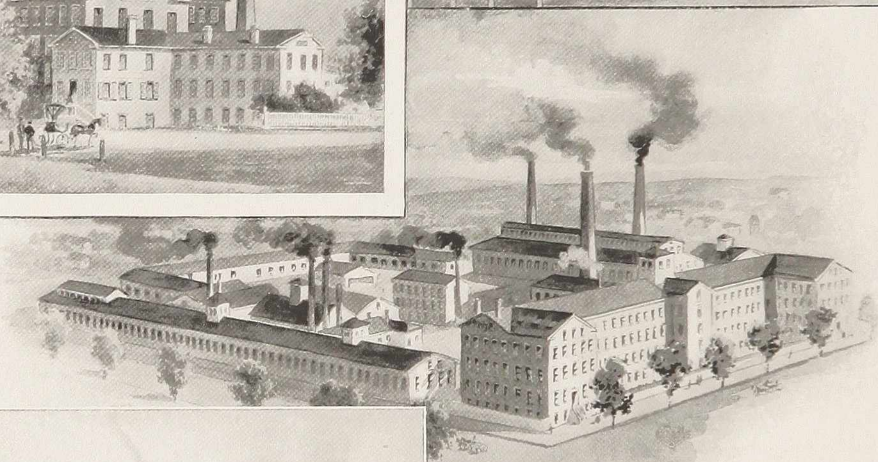
1854

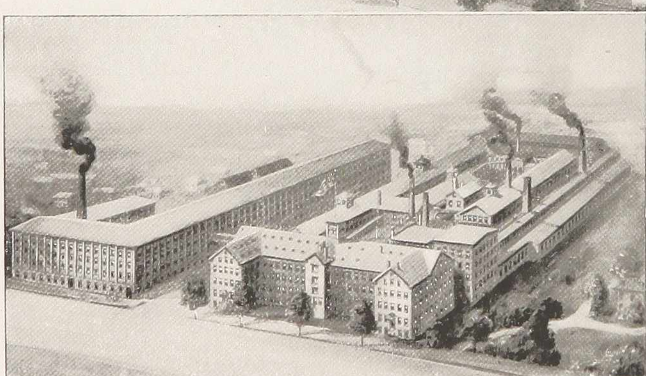


1867

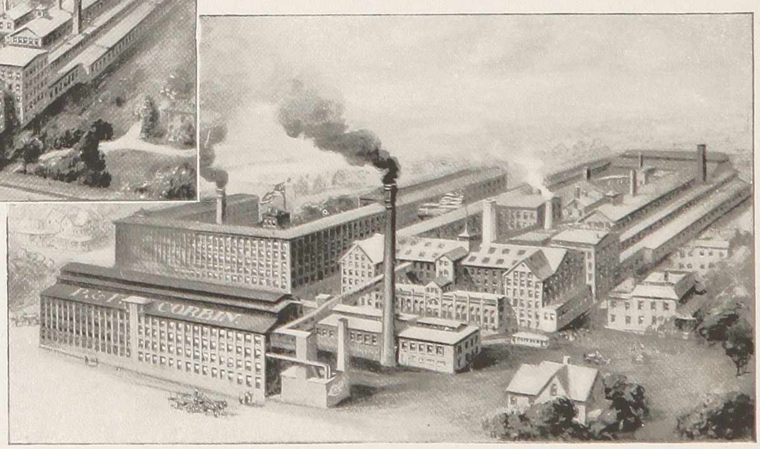


1877





1885



THE GROWTH OF THE PLANT

1896

1854-1880
P. & F. CORBIN — CORPORATION

THE need for a larger capital became more urgent as the business grew larger and the trade made demands for more goods than could be supplied with the facilities at hand, and after much deliberation and discussion it was decided to incorporate the business and sell enough stock to get the money needed.

The members of the firm of North & Stanley, who owned the premises P. & F. Corbin then occupied, and whose factory was under the same roof, had had an excellent opportunity to learn of the way in which the business was done and the outlook for the future, and were very willing to buy stock in the new corporation as an investment. The relations of the two concerns were of a very friendly nature, and it was decided to make them more intimate and personal and to give the North & Stanley people an interest in return for the money they advanced for the enlargement of the business.

On February 14, 1854, the date whose fiftieth anniversary this book commemorates, seven men met in the little packing-room of P. & F. Corbin, the office being too small to accommodate so many persons at one time, and there the following articles of association were signed:

ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION.

"We, the subscribed, pursuant to the laws of the state relating to joint stock corporations, do hereby associate and form ourselves into a corporation, under the name of P. & F. Corbin, for the purpose of manufacturing, buying and selling articles of iron, of brass and of other materials commonly used in the hardware trade and of merchandising in the same, the manufacturing to be carried on in the town of New Britain and state of Connecticut. The capital stock of this corporation shall be fifty thousand dollars, divided into two thousand shares of twenty-five dollars each, of which we, the subscribers, take the number of shares set opposite our respective names."

These men, who were thus the charter members of the company, were Philip Corbin, Frank Corbin, Waldo Corbin and William Corbin of P. & F. Corbin, and Frederic H. North, Oliver Stanley and John B. Talcott of North

& Stanley. Of the seven, Philip Corbin, the president, and John B. Talcott, a director, are still identified with the company's interests.

The company was thus capitalized at fifty thousand dollars and the stock was divided into two thousand shares with a par value of twenty-five dollars each. The three newcomers were sold seven hundred and twenty of the two thousand shares, leaving the controlling vote in the hands of the Corbins, who retained the active conduct of the business and carried it on with the same freedom as under the former conditions.

On February 21st, the officers were elected, F. H. North being made the president, Philip Corbin, secretary, and Frank Corbin, treasurer, the board of directors being composed of these three officers.

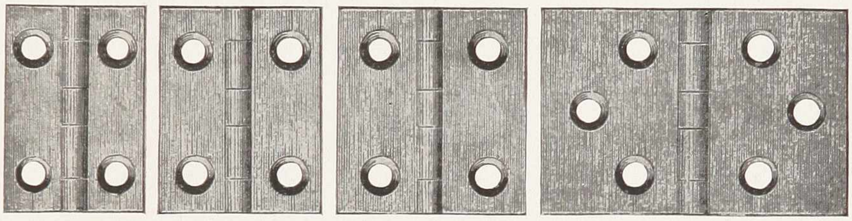
The rapidly-growing business multiplied the labor of management, which up to this time had been solely in the charge of Philip Corbin. At about this time he began to entrust to his associates more and more of the execution of the work, relieving himself of much of the care and responsibility connected with the production of the goods and the details of selling, and giving a larger portion of his time to the general oversight of the business. There had not heretofore been much necessity for system in management or division of duties, William, Waldo, and Frank turning to with a will wherever their efforts were most needed, giving to Philip their cordial support and coöperation, but relying upon him for the planning of the work. Now, however, with the transfer of responsibility for different features of the business, there came a division of duties.

Frank Corbin, who had made a number of trips selling goods for the concern, was given charge of this portion of the work in the East. It was decided to open a sales office in New York and here he went to take the management of the store, taking with him his brother, George, a man named John Rogers being hired to travel from the factory to cover the West, making the first trip into this region for the company. He proved an excellent salesman and did much in the way of introducing Corbin goods in this new and undeveloped territory.

William Corbin, a young man of twenty years, who had shown a special aptitude in the production of goods, was made the first superintendent and put in charge of the mechanical end of the business. A prominent part in the conduct of affairs was given to Waldo Corbin. While Philip Corbin was thus relieved of much of the responsibility for the detail connected with the work, he kept as closely informed regarding all branches of it as before, and was thus

able to direct affairs intelligently and yet have more time and thought to devote to the larger work of shaping the policy and directing the general course of the business. Its rapid growth made increased care and watchfulness necessary, and brought new problems constantly before him for solution, taxing his energies to the utmost. At the same time, he managed the sales for the territory covered from the factory and a portion of his time was spent on the road away from home.

At about the time that the company was incorporated, wrought brass butts, which the little catalogue described as "Warranted Stronger than Cast, and True in the Joints," were added to the line and put upon the market. These goods were then only made by one other American firm in this country, the Scovill Manufacturing Company of Waterbury, Conn., of which Mr. J. M. L. Scovill, the founder, was also the manager. In order to introduce the goods and induce dealers to buy them in preference to the older brand, P. & F. Corbin sold them somewhat below the Scovill prices, and Mr. Scovill several times sent a Mr. Partree to call upon P. & F. Corbin and expostulate with them for the prices they were making. Meeting with no success, he finally came to deliver an ultimatum, and meeting Mr. Philip Corbin on the little platform in front of the office door, told him that if P. & F. Corbin did not advance the price of brass butts the price would be put down to where the Corbin factory could not make them, even though it cut below the Scovill cost.

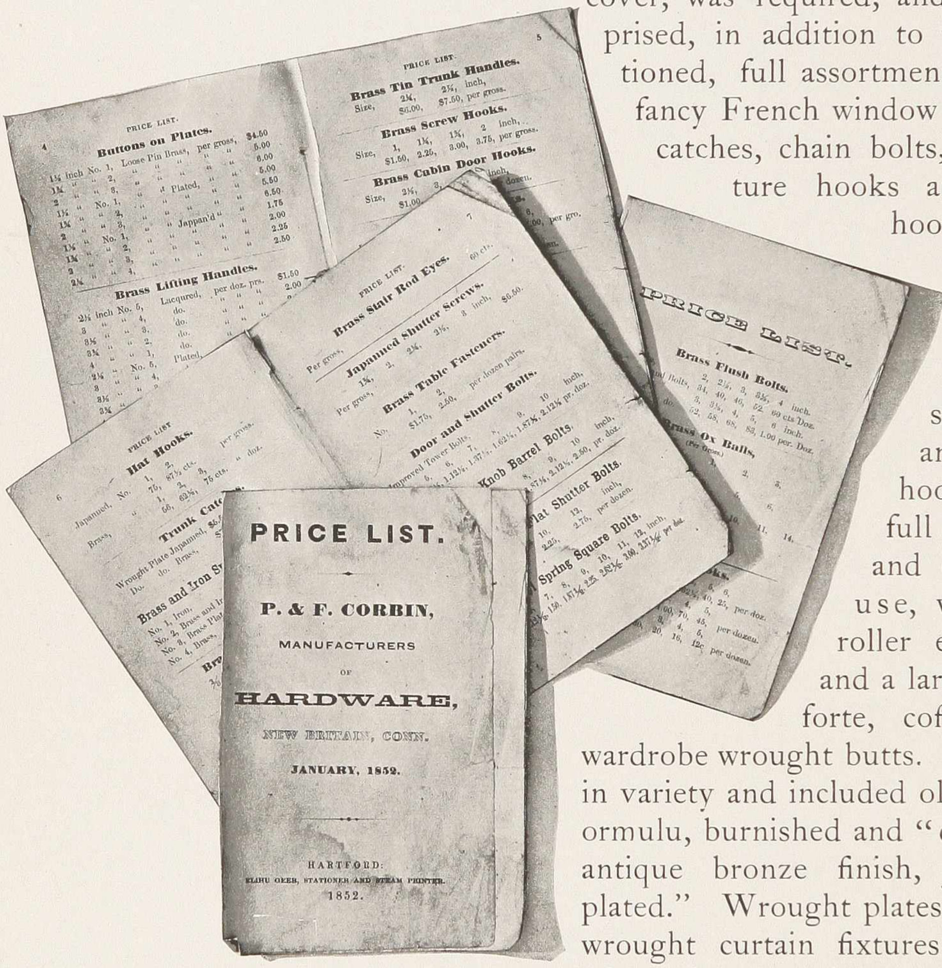


BRASS BUTTS

"Go back to Mr. Scovill," said Mr. Corbin, "and tell him that when I was a boy and hunted muskrats I never shot a muskrat while it was under water, but when his head appeared I fired—and got him. Now, if Mr. Scovill wants to play a muskrat game he can, but every time his head shows above water I'll bring him down," and with this message Mr. Partree was dismissed.

A few days later Mr. Scovill appeared at the old Humphrey House in New Britain and asked for a personal interview with the Corbin managers. When Philip and Frank Corbin appeared he greeted them with, "Which is the fellow who hunts muskrats?" The meeting ended with the most friendly feeling on both sides.

In 1849 or 1850, Corbin, Whiting & Co. issued the first price list of Corbin goods, a card which would slip into an ordinary envelope, with the price list upon one side and the firm's name upon the other. In 1852, P. & F. Corbin, the copartnership, issued a little book with eight pages and cover, which listed all the goods of manufacture and included some bolts made by Frederick T. Stanley. In 1856, a somewhat larger book, with thirty-six pages and cover, was required, and the articles listed comprised, in addition to the goods already mentioned, full assortments of cupboard catches, fancy French window catches, closet and trunk catches, chain bolts, cabin door hooks, picture hooks and nails, looking-glass hooks, wardrobe and coat and hat hooks in large variety, sash fasteners and lifts, drawer and drop handles, door pulls, shutter screws, house, tea, and call bells, bird-cage hooks, door knockers, a full line of the window-shade and curtain fixtures then in use, with rack pulleys and roller ends, and tassel hooks, and a large assortment of piano-forte, coffin, railroad-coach, and wardrobe wrought butts. The finishes had grown in variety and included olive green, bronze, brass, ormulu, burnished and "dead," silvered, iron with antique bronze finish, japanned and "electro-plated." Wrought plates to cupboard catches and wrought curtain fixtures foreshadowed the time when the drop-hammers should displace the foundry in many goods. In almost all of these goods P. & F. Corbin were the first — or among the first — of American manufacturers to put them upon the market, in pursuance with their policy to so far as possible avoid domestic competition. The lifting handles, first made in 1850 (Corbin's present



FIRST CATALOGUE, ISSUED 1852



ANDREW CORBIN,
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

No. 516 line), were also used in those days for coffin handles, and P. & F. Corbin sold them for that purpose. They soon added other patterns and the assortment grew rapidly, particularly after 1857, at which time Stephen J. Arnold was engaged as a designer of these goods. He had previously in a similar capacity worked for Bailey & Brainard of Middle Haddam, manufacturers of coffin trimmings, and the old Corbin catalogues show many elaborately decorative patterns of handles which he designed. These were at one time one of the principal articles of manufacture, but as the business became specialized and was taken up by concerns confining their efforts to this single line, the sales dwindled, and in 1871 the goods were taken off the list of merchantable articles, the old original lifting handles alone remaining.

In the front of the 1856 catalogue appears a notice, reading:

> TERMS.
>
> Your Note of Six Months.
>
> N. B.—All accounts less than one hundred dollars must be closed 1st July and 1st January, by cash, less discount for unexpired time at the rate of ten per cent. per annum.
>
> P. & F. Corbin,
New Britain, Conn.

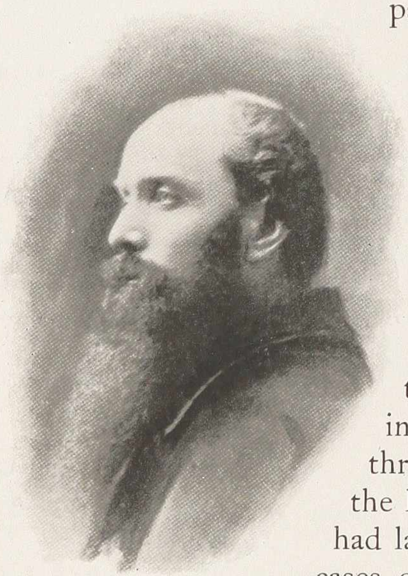
Similar notices appear in later books until after the war, when the printed terms of payment were changed to thirty days net cash, payable in funds at par in New York or Boston. There were still a number of accounts which were carried on the old basis of semi-annual payments, and the last few accounts of this kind were changed to the present commercial basis only a short time ago.

This basis for payment made it additionally difficult for a concern with limited capital to do business. Notes were very generally given notwithstanding the inducement of a large cash discount, and these notes were discounted by the banks when the holders were in need of money and the banks had it to loan.

In addition, the fluctuating value of the currency then used was a constant source of annoyance and anxiety. Notes were issued by individual banks at their own discretion and the value of such notes varied with the standing of the bank that issued them and the distance from the place where the bank was located. The notes of good New York banks passed at their face value, good Philadelphia notes were subjected in New York to an exchange discount of from five to seven per cent., and the New York exchange discount on good Chicago banks ranged as high as twenty-seven per cent., with a lesser deduction for near-by cities.

A "Bank Note Detector" was published, giving the value of the notes of various banks, and this formed the standard for payment. If, for instance, a guest at an inn tendered a bank note in payment for his bill, mine host would consult his bank note detector and deduct the discount named therein before accepting it—or refuse it altogether if the standing of the bank was not satisfactory to him. It was, therefore, of importance to get the right money, and the matter of collections was thus burdened with an additional necessity for precaution. This condition existed until the United States Government issued the greenbacks at the time of the Civil War.

The business received its first check when in 1857, three years after the new company was formed, the failure of the Ohio Trust Co. precipitated a panic which caused hard times all over the country. "The panic of '57" is still referred to as the worst the country has ever seen. There were absolutely no orders to be obtained, and for the only time in its existence the factory was shut down for lack of trade. No work was done from August, 1857, until the following February. There was great privation everywhere. The banks refused to loan money upon any terms. Notes could not be discounted and gold was almost never seen. Just before the crash came Mr. Philip Corbin went to the bank in Hartford with which he did business and drew out three or four hundred dollars in gold, which he put in the little bureau drawer in which once before a little money had lasted for a long time, and used it for relieving unusual cases of distress among P. & F. Corbin's workmen, doling out a dollar or two at a time to make the precious hoard go as far as possible, for no one knew when the tide would turn.



STEPHEN J. ARNOLD

At this time, there were forty or fifty employees, many of whom had families, and much suffering ensued, which every effort was made to relieve. At one time a fish net was borrowed, and a party of half a dozen went with Mr. Corbin to the junction of the Mattabessett River with the Connecticut and fished there all day through holes cut in the ice. Several bushels of fish were caught and were brought into the factory and spread out upon the floor, where all who wished might help themselves.

The company kept its credit intact throughout this distressing period.

Indeed, it was only once seriously threatened. Before the hard times came, a note for a thousand dollars had been given a Mr. Brown in Waterbury, in payment for material. This note was made payable at one Hartford bank and Mr. Brown had placed it in the hands of another bank in the same city. When the note became due the bank that held it would not renew it since it was not made payable at its place of business, nor would the other bank do anything because it did not hold the note, each bank claiming that it must give such favors as it could to those who relied solely upon it. The only thing left to do was to see Mr. Brown, and, accordingly, Philip and Frank Corbin set out one morning on the drive to Waterbury, taking a lunch with them because there was no money with which to pay hotel bills. On the way they met Mr. Brown, who had started to New Britain to see them, and the three men turned out to the side of the road to feed their horses and share the Corbin brothers' lunch, talking business the while. They secured from Mr. Brown a new loan to cover the old indebtedness, paying therefor the rate of two per cent. per month, which under the circumstances they were very willing to do.

When business revived, the company forged ahead more rapidly than ever, and a number of changes were made in the few succeeding years. In 1858, Andrew Corbin, the present first vice-president, became identified with the company and ever since has taken an active part in the conduct of its affairs. Since 1854 he had been engaged in the manufacturing of jewelry, first with the firm of Churchill & Lewis and later for himself, occupying room in the building with P. & F. Corbin.

In 1859, the continual absence of Frank Corbin in New York, where he had charge of the store, made it necessary to elect a new treasurer. Philip Corbin was elected to fill the place and held the office continuously until the latter part of 1903, when it became necessary to relieve Mr. Corbin of some of the cares and responsibilities connected with the business, and Mr. Charles E. Wetmore was elected to the position of treasurer. At the same time that Mr. Corbin was elected treasurer, Charles Peck, of the Peck & Walter M'f'g Co., came into the company and was made secretary, the firm of Peck & Walter going out of business. With the two additions to the managing force at home, Mr. Philip Corbin was able to spend a portion of the time upon the road, which he did for a short period only. Before the beginning of 1860 the condition of his health warned him that he must undertake less, and he accordingly abandoned the road altogether, and delegated this work to others. Salesmen were hired to travel and since that time P. & F. Corbin

have employed a force of men of varying numbers to visit customers in their interest.

At this time the greater portion of the sales were made in the East, the wholesale hardware trade of the country being almost entirely in the hands of the large importing houses in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Portland, Maine, was in those days of relatively much greater importance than at present. The West was largely undeveloped, Chicago being farther from New York commercially than San Francisco is to-day. It was, however, canvassed for trade by salesmen traveling from the factory, and many of the firm Western friends of the Corbin goods date their acquaintance with them back to the days when the trade was largely in foreign made articles and the Corbin salesman came as a pioneer.



CHARLES PECK

In 1859, a new salesman, who had a large acquaintance among the Eastern buyers, was sent out from the factory to canvass for orders. He sent in fluent reports telling of the favor with which the goods were received, but the orders did not materialize. Finally, Mr. Philip Corbin packed his little sample case and started out after him on the same route, returning with orders for more than 5,000 gross of ox balls alone, as well as for other articles in goodly quantities—showing the demand that then existed for this now nearly obsolete article, and the fact that there were salesmen and salesmen, then as now.

In 1860, Frank Corbin gave up his connection with the company to embark in the plumbers' supply business, and Andrew Corbin went to New York to take charge of the store. In the fall of this same year, William Corbin, the superintendent of the factory and a director of the company, elected in Frank Corbin's stead, went to New York with the "Wide Awakes" to join in a demonstration in support of Lincoln's candidacy for the presidency and caught a cold, from the effects of which he died. He was a man who could illy be spared. His many good qualities made him universally loved and respected, and as a superintendent he could not be surpassed. He was succeeded by John M. Spring, a young man who came into the factory as a workman in 1851, and by his energy and superior ability had risen to a foreman's place and made

himself of value to the company. He was a worthy successor to William Corbin and filled the position of superintendent for many years. Waldo Corbin was elected director to fill the vacancy caused by his brother's death.

The death of William Corbin and the absence of his brother Andrew threw back upon Philip Corbin much of the burden he had entrusted to them, and the work was almost more than he could do. At this time one of the local manufacturers — in fact, the one who had originally tried to compete with the Corbins for their lifting handle business — called upon Mr. Philip Corbin and after some talk concerning the situation proposed that his company and that of P. & F. Corbin consolidate, each putting in its plant at its inventoried valuation and receiving in exchange stock in proportion to the assets. The proposer was willing to have the new company retain the name of P. & F. Corbin and to give Philip Corbin the management of its affairs — in fact, he showed a willingness to make concessions and an anxiety to help Mr. Corbin to gain relief from his present difficulties that smacked suspiciously of self-interest. After asking a few questions it became apparent that in such a consolidation the Corbin interest would be less than that of the proposer's concern and it would be easy to vote him out of the business he had created.

"Go back to the man who sent you here," he said to the proposer of the plan, "and tell him that while I live he shall never get control of my business."

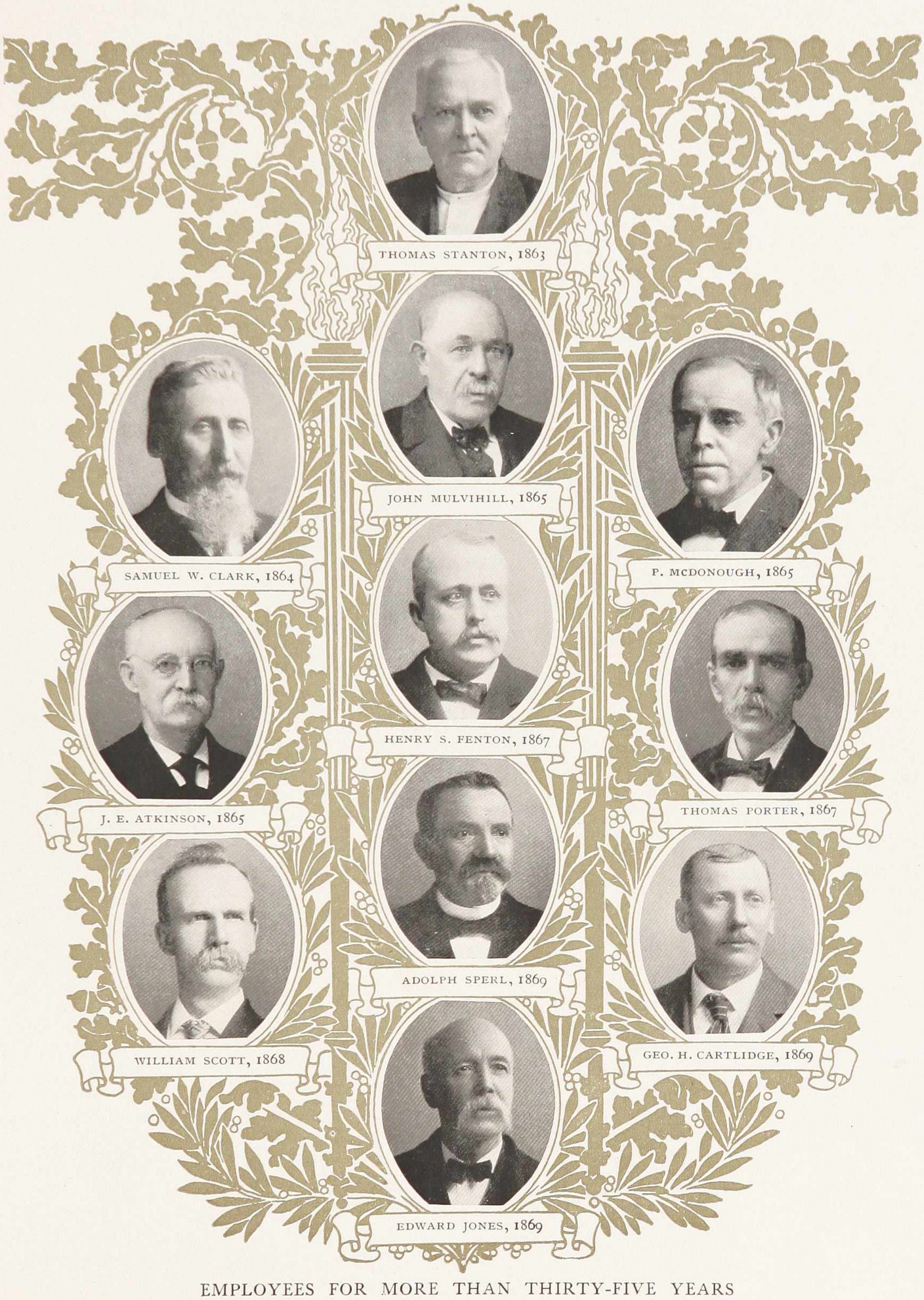
A number of years later, a man in authority in the office of his principal local competitors told Mr. Corbin that the proposal was, as Mr. Corbin divined, made to get him out of the business and stop the growth which they felt to be a menace to their supremacy, and that the promptness with which their scheme was fathomed created considerable consternation when their messenger returned.

On August 17, 1863, Edward L. Prior, now assistant treasurer and manager of accounts, came into the Corbin shops. He at first worked in the polishing room, and Mr. John M. Spring, the superintendent, wanted him to take a polishing contract, which he declined. Mr. Spring then set him to work in the packing room with Mr. Andrew Hart (still in charge of the hardware packing room) and later he helped Secretary Peck, who up to that time did all the office work required. As the work increased and his experience grew, he assumed more and more of the office work, gradually working his way into the office, of which he now has charge.

With the increase in quantity of machinery, there arose a need for someone to keep it in repair, and a machinist was hired for this work. In 1865, there were three men in the machine room, one of whom was John E. Atkin-



EMPLOYEES FOR MORE THAN THIRTY-FIVE YEARS
AND DATE OF BEGINNING SERVICE



EMPLOYEES FOR MORE THAN THIRTY-FIVE YEARS

AND DATE OF BEGINNING SERVICE

son, now retired. There were no machines made in the factory until 1866, when a press was built; then an eight-spindle press for drilling butts followed, and from that time on P. & F. Corbin have built a large portion of the machinery used in their works. At this time cast butts were added, made first in plain and japanned finishes. The wrought butts made had proven very profitable, the prices having very largely advanced and the demand constantly increasing. Beginning with January 1, 1864, these goods, which had been sold at a discount of 20, 15, and 5 per cent. from the list, were advanced to a premium of 10 per cent. above the same list and later to 30 per cent. premium, where they remained for a number of years. Then, at the solicitation of the hardware dealers, the list was advanced to permit a discount to be made. Butts were a very important item in the Corbin line, and it is probable that their prominence influenced the trend of the additions of new goods and was a factor in the assortment of "everything in builders' hardware" now sold.

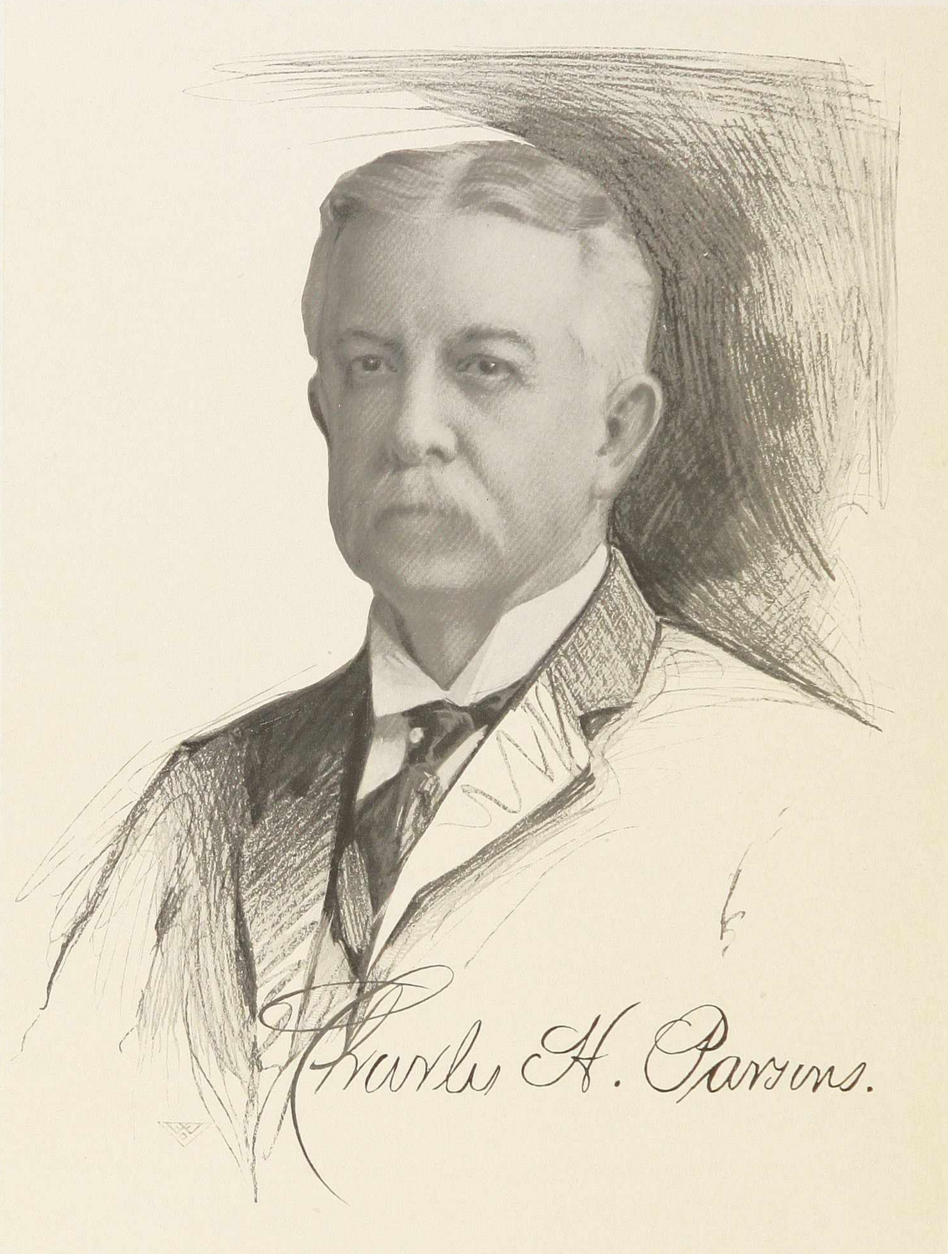
With the change in values incident to the Civil War, the old system of long credits disappeared and a cash basis substituted. In the Corbin printed matter this new notice replaced the one already quoted:

> TERMS.
>
> NET CASH, payable in funds at par in New York or Boston. Bills having run over thirty days will be subject to our draft at sight. For present Prices see List of Advances and Discounts accompanying.

Since the removal to the new location, the business of P. & F. Corbin had been carried on in rented quarters—an ell-shaped building adjoining the hook-and-eye shop of North & Stanley. This was gradually filled and additional room was secured in the upper portion of the hook-and-eye shop adjoining, the first overflow into the new building occurring in 1863. On Christmas of that year the machinery of the finishing room was moved into a room now occupied in the manufacture of cast butts. More room was acquired later, and soon it was found desirable to have the entire building. On August 17, 1864, it was decided to acquire the property.

The building thus acquired now forms the central portion of the main building of the Corbin plant, situated just behind the present office. Additional stories have been added to it and the internal arrangement altered to suit the needs of the business, but old employees remember and can readily point out the old limits of the building.

Again, in 1865, a second plat of land was purchased, and the Corbin industry was firmly moored to its present location.



CHARLES H. PARSONS,
SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT

As the business grew and the company's influence was correspondingly increased it made many friends. In the hardware field its goods were universally hailed with favor. At home, the company had some friends among disinterested persons, but they were comparatively few in the community, in which all the interest centered in the factories which supported it, and the rivalries of companies and business houses were carried down to the employees in the shops and affected life in all its relations. P. & F. Corbin were still far from being the largest and most influential of New Britain's business houses, and so suffered considerably at times,— although no attempt to injure them in any way ever succeeded in doing much harm beyond the annoyance and trouble of the moment.

One instance that occurred is worthy of mention as showing how the divisions in the business camps affected life in its other aspects. At the time of which we are writing, P. & F. Corbin had no iron foundry of their own, but sent their patterns to the foundry of their largest local competitor, who made the castings and returned them in a rough state to the Corbin factory. One day, in 1864, a man was sent to the other factory with some patterns and an order for castings, but he returned, bringing all the patterns which had been sent out, and reported that P. & F. Corbin could have no more castings made there. Foundries were not plentiful in those days, and as P. & F. Corbin experienced considerable difficulty in getting castings made, having to send patterns to other cities, it was at once decided that a foundry of their own should be built in the spring of 1865. Land was purchased on Orchard Street upon which to build, and plans were made for a new building, 40 x 112 feet.

New Britain was at that time organized as a borough. The Corbin brothers had been too absorbed in their business to take any personal part in local politics, but their business opponents were actively interested and the local officials and the state representatives were of their friends. So it was perhaps only considered by them a fair measure when the town's representative in the state legislature secured the passage of an act authorizing the borough of New Britain to establish building lines, after which the New Britain burgesses immediately passed an ordinance establishing a building line twenty feet back on the west side of Orchard Street, spoiling P. & F. Corbin's new foundry site and making it impossible to build there.

When Mr. Philip Corbin sought legal advice, his counsel, ex-Governor Hubbard of Connecticut, did not give him much encouragement, for a speedy solution

of the difficulty. So long as the act authorizing the borough to establish building lines was in force the burgesses were in a position to enforce the offensive ordinance; to fight it out in the courts would take much time and money, and in the meantime, P. & F. Corbin would be without the needed foundry. About the only way to get speedy relief was in a repeal of the ordinance, and it was useless to expect the present officials to take any such action. Manifestly, there must be a new warden and new burgesses, in order to nullify the action of the present body.

The next local election was held in the following April. It seemed useless to try to secure from the Republican leaders the nomination of desirable candidates, so no attempt at interference was made and at the Republican caucus a strongly anti-Corbin set of nominations was made without opposition. However, after conferring with the leading Democrat of the place, and giving the matter due consideration, it was decided to put up privately a People's ticket, with Philip Corbin at the head as warden, and to conduct a personal canvass for votes among the Democrats and the Corbin supporters. This was done, and so secretly was the canvass made that it was not known there were two tickets in the field until well along in the afternoon of election day, when the head of the rival house burst into the office of his concern with the announcement that "there was a snide game being played; that there was an independent ticket out with Phil Corbin at the head, and it MUST be defeated." A blinding snowstorm — one of the worst of the winter — was raging. Carriages were hurried out to bring in voters, more than half of those who were thus brought to the polls voting the Corbin ticket, and when the ballots were counted it was found that the independent ticket had an overwhelming majority. The first act of the new body of burgesses was to repeal the obnoxious ordinance fixing the Orchard Street building line, and P. & F. Corbin built the iron foundry in the spring of 1865, as originally planned.

At the end of his first — and only — term as warden, Mr. Corbin was urged to remain in office, his occupancy having given the townspeople universal satisfaction, but he had gained his end and secured justice for his company, and declined to serve again.

With the addition of the new iron foundry, the increase in the production of iron goods multiplied. In addition to the castings for their own goods, they did a general foundry business and furnished many tons of castings to concerns without a foundry. Among others, there were Pratt & Whitney of Hartford and Hiram Tucker & Co. of Boston. This latter company was engaged in the

manufacture of gas fixtures finished by a patent process, in what was then known as "Tucker Bronze," and which is now duplicated in the Corbin amber bronze finish. Castings in large quantities were furnished them for several years. Later, when P. & F. Corbin were fully embarked in the cast butt business, an ornamental design of butt was made by one of their workmen named Fracker and sent to Hiram Tucker, who put his finish upon them and returned them. They met with instant favor and the estimation in which they were held may be gauged by the prices paid. In the latter part of 1868, the sales books show copies of invoices of these goods to Burditt & Williams, the first Boston people to handle them, the prices averaging over $3.00 per pair, net.

Later, P. & F. Corbin learned to apply the same finish. They were the first to use it upon hardware and its use marked the first step in the direction of the finer grades of builders' hardware made by P. & F. Corbin.

In the fall of 1863, a two-hundred horse-power engine was installed, although only about eighty horse power was actually required, showing how the Corbin managers built for the future, then as now. William Scott was made engineer and ever since then has had charge of the motive power of the Corbin plant. At this time, the force employed had grown to about three hundred men.

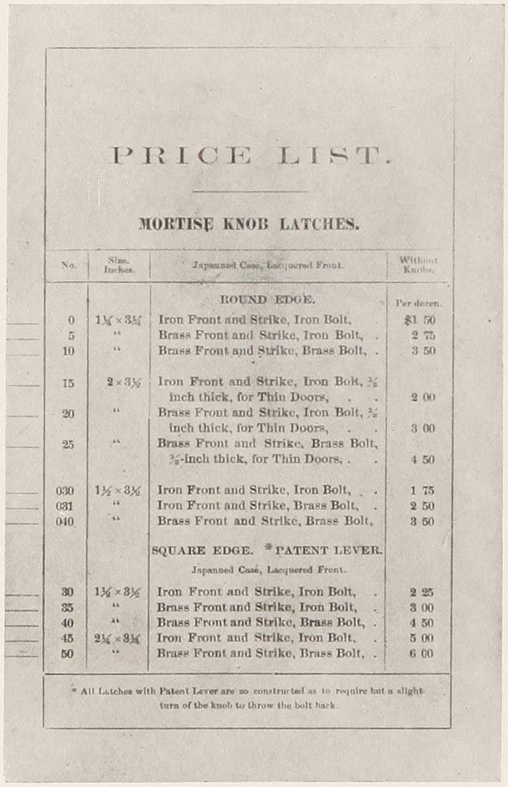
In 1867, a cloth-bound, fully illustrated catalogue of goods was issued. It was a much more ambitious book than had previously been attempted, requiring a full new set of wood cuts. So good were these cuts that a number of them were used as late as the 1895 edition. Butts were brought from the back of the book to the front, where they have always remained. Many new forms of bolts were seen. The slide bell pulls now sold were shown. Sash fasteners of a pattern now obsolete, bed-keys, toilet screws, picture nails, curtain fixtures, and hat hooks of shapes that would now be thought strange, mark the advance made in some directions since the book was issued. Some of the goods were quite ornamental—for instance, several styles of coat and hat hooks made by drawing a fancy knurled brass rod over a steel wire, bending it to shape and tipping it with porcelain knobs. Twenty-six of the one hundred and thirty-two pages were devoted to coffin trimmings, many of them very elaborate in design.

The policy of confining the assortment to goods made only abroad had long since been abandoned, for it was found that so soon as a Corbin article became popular other manufacturers took it up and strong competition ensued. It was not until 1868, however, that locks and knobs were added to the assortment and a definite attempt made to put upon the market a complete line of builders' hardware. At first all the locks were made with wrought working

parts. Following the usual custom, new goods were added as rapidly as patterns and tools could be made, and in 1870 the assortment of locks and latches contained

23 mortise knob latches,
2 mortise night latches,
18 mortise dead locks,
33 mortise knob locks,
9 mortise front door locks,
4 mortise vestibule latches,
109 rim locks and latches,

together with the necessary keys in malleable iron and brass, twenty-one different key plates and thirty-three different knobs. In addition to the mineral and porcelain knobs with japanned roses, there were three ornamented white metal knobs with heavy bronze plated surfaces, and two of bronze metal, all knobs having roses to match. Coffin hardware was relegated to the rear; there were accessions in the way of sash fasteners, chain-door fasteners, store-door handles, door pulls, sash lifts, shutter knobs, bolts, butts, and bells, and other goods in house trimmings. A patent screwless spindle was shown. In fact, the new field was being covered as completely and as rapidly as the Corbin facilities would permit. The year following (1871), a lock list of 320 pages was required to catalogue these goods, and from that time to the present there has been a persistent active effort to put upon the market the most complete assortment of everything required in house-finishing hardware, and to have it of the best quality.



PRICE LIST.

MORTISE KNOB LATCHES.

No.	Size. Inches.	Japanned Case, Lacquered Front.	Without Knobs.
		ROUND EDGE.	Per dozen.
0	1⅝ × 3¼	Iron Front and Strike, Iron Bolt, .	$1 50
5	"	Brass Front and Strike, Iron Bolt, .	2 75
10	"	Brass Front and Strike, Brass Bolt, .	3 50
15	2 × 3½	Iron Front and Strike, Iron Bolt, ⅜ inch thick, for Thin Doors, . .	2 00
20	"	Brass Front and Strike, Iron Bolt, ⅜ inch thick, for Thin Doors, . .	3 00
25	"	Brass Front and Strike, Brass Bolt, ⅜-inch thick, for Thin Doors, . .	4 50
030	1½ × 3½	Iron Front and Strike, Iron Bolt, . .	1 75
031	"	Iron Front and Strike, Brass Bolt, .	2 50
040	"	Brass Front and Strike, Brass Bolt,	3 50
		SQUARE EDGE. *PATENT LEVER.	
		Japanned Case, Lacquered Front.	
30	1½ × 3½	Iron Front and Strike, Iron Bolt, .	2 25
35	"	Brass Front and Strike, Iron Bolt, .	3 00
40	"	Brass Front and Strike, Brass Bolt, .	4 50
45	2¼ × 3¼	Iron Front and Strike, Iron Bolt, .	5 00
50	"	Brass Front and Strike, Brass Bolt, .	6 00

* All Latches with Patent Lever are so constructed as to require but a slight turn of the knob to throw the bolt back.

FIRST LOCK LIST, 1869

There always seems to have been a race in the Corbin factory between the line of goods and the facilities for making them, and one of the problems that have always confronted the management of the company has been to provide

additional buildings fast enough to accommodate the machinery necessary to carry out the plans for the business. In 1868, the buildings of the factory were increased by the addition of an extension to the east of their main building, matching the North & Stanley building on the west. In February of 1869 the record says that "a complete inventory could not be taken on account of building, moving, etc., and the matter was postponed until July or January." Thus the business absorbed the capital it produced. Dividends were purposely kept lower than those of many of the neighboring concerns whose net earnings were less, in order that the money might be used in developing the business, and for the same reason the officers were content with small salaries. Yet, despite all economy and precautions, the expense of developing and enlarging the business had made such large expenditures necessary that at one time, in 1869, one of the two banks with which P. & F. Corbin did their business had discounted notes for about eighty thousand dollars and the other for forty thousand dollars and each had made accommodation loans for about an equal amount to carry the Corbins through their building operations. Suddenly, to their surprise, each of the banks sent a notice to the company stating that the indebtedness must be reduced one-half within thirty days. The situation was made plain, however, when a friend told Mr. Philip Corbin of meeting one of the members of a rival manufacturing company, who said that "they had got Phil Corbin now just where they wanted him and would make him fail inside of sixty days." By dint of hard work, by borrowing wherever they could and paying any rate of interest asked, the obligations were met when due and P. & F. Corbin were tided over the temporary stringency in their money matters and again reached a solid financial footing. There was never a time in the history of the concern when its visible assets did not more than make secure any indebtedness it might have incurred, and in this instance the only difficulty and annoyance was in the necessity of raising so large an amount in so short a time.

Two or three years later, one of the principal manufacturers of Waterbury, whose goods P. & F. Corbin were selling in connection with their own, called upon Mr. Philip Corbin and was given a large order. As he folded it and put it into his pocket he told Mr. Corbin that if it was not convenient to pay in cash when the bill was due he would be willing to accept a note, but Mr. Corbin said they would pay cash, thanking him, however, for his offer. In the course of the conversation the visitor remarked:

"Your left-handed friends here didn't succeed in their attempt to fail you, did they?"

"What do you know about it?" asked Mr. Corbin.

It transpired he knew all about it, and he told Mr. Corbin that his rivals had not only induced the banks to withdraw their favor, but had addressed a confidential letter to all concerns to whom they thought P. & F. Corbin might be indebted, advising them to collect any outstanding bills as quickly as possible, as the company was on the verge of failure.

When discussing the incident with one of his brothers later, his brother said, "They had you failed two or three times, Phil, but the trouble was that you didn't know it."

In 1870, the number of workmen had increased to about five hundred. The strength and size of the concern rendered it less subject to annoyance and injury from its business rivals, and although the same antagonistic feeling was apparent for many years there was no attempt to make trouble outside the legitimate trade rivalry for orders. And it is worthy of note and comment that in all their career the only attempts at reprisal that P. & F. Corbin have made have been to enlarge their field the faster and to cover the disputed lines of goods the more thoroughly and fully, to the end that the attacks upon their trade might be nullified. Thus it was made stronger and but grew the faster for the obstacles it had to encounter.



DESIGNER AT WORK

From this time on there is less of special incident to record. The business had grown to a magnitude that overshadowed separate occurrences and made them comparatively unimportant. When Doen, Corbin & Co.'s horse went lame on the tread-mill it was a serious catastrophe—and a new grindstone or lathe a thing of moment. In later years, a new building with equipment complete hardly excited as much attention, and the constant additions of machinery and introduction of new processes caused such things to lose their novelty.

The larger the business grew, the more momentum was gained and the more rapidly the growth continued.

In 1872 Andrew Corbin left New York to come to the factory to become general manager of the factory, a position he has ever since held. A man of rare mechanical ability, with a quick, accurate judgment of the relative value of processes of manufacture, and the Corbin faculty of planning upon broad lines for future needs, it would be difficult to overstate the influence he has exerted upon the business. He and his brother Philip, working and planning together, have made the factory what it is to-day—as homogeneous and convenient as though planned and built as a whole instead of being erected piecemeal with intervals of years between buildings.

With the return of Andrew Corbin to New Britain a new and more vigorous spirit seemed to animate the actions of the concern. It was at about this time that local competitors came to look upon the business as a permanent one and ceased to oppose it except in the market, and the last superficial aspect of anything like a life-and-death struggle for existence and local recognition, disappeared. Philip Corbin was, for the first time, freed from the detail of the production of goods and enabled to devote to the general conduct of the business those rare administrative qualities that have gained for the company its present preëminence. Andrew Corbin managed the production, with John M. Spring, the superintendent, to carry out the details. Quiet and unassuming to the verge of self-effacement, the quickening and masterful impulse of Andrew Corbin's factory management has been felt and seen, but never exploited, and will continue to influence the manufacture of the goods so long as the present line is made in the buildings now occupied.



MODELING

When Andrew Corbin left New York the charge of the store there was given to the youngest of the brothers, George S. Corbin, who went to New York in 1854 with Frank Corbin, when the branch was started, and had been connected with the store ever since. He remained in charge until Butler & Constant became the New York agents and the branch was temporarily abandoned.

The rapidity with which the business was shaped along the new lines is shown by the catalogue issued in 1872, which is strictly a catalogue of builders' hardware. Goods in other branches of hardware were omitted, and the 506 pages present an assortment that for its day must have been unequaled.

In 1874, the most decorative hardware ever produced by any manufacturer was added to the Corbin line in the form of bronze goods with surfaces finished in enamel of different colors, just as enameled jewelry, badges, lodge and class pins, etc., are made to-day. It did not achieve a large sale, owing to the high cost and the unpropitious time for its introduction, the country being then in the throes of a panic with the following season of depression. The style of ornament then prevailing, with its flat design rising above a level background, was particularly favorable to this treatment and no special designs were required. An enameling jeweler from Providence, named Horace Bunting, had charge of the work and finished the goods in a room especially fitted for the purpose in the factory basement.

The goods were very high in price, being expensive to produce, and their use was limited to the houses of very wealthy people. One residence in Taunton had a number of rooms fitted with this class of hardware, the enamel being tinted to correspond with the color scheme of each room. The cost for the enameled hardware used in this house was over three thousand dollars, a very unusual expenditure in those days, when special designs and finishes were comparatively unknown. The enameled knobs used on this job were billed at \$8.50 and \$9.50 per pair—and other items in proportion. The front door trim alone cost \$103.50.



CHASER AT WORK

The finish on enameled hardware was practically everlasting, and such of these goods as have been in use since the time they were made present the same appearance to-day as when first applied.

In 1873, the company sustained a loss in the death of Waldo Corbin, then a director, and having in his especial charge the manufacture of wrought butts. His death occurred on February 9th, two days before the date set for the

annual meeting, and in respect to his memory the meeting was deferred for one week.

Mr. Waldo Corbin's death having made it necessary to choose a new director, Andrew Corbin was elected at this meeting.



PATTERN MAKER

In 1876, it was thought advisable to make a public display of builders' hardware, and an exhibit was sent to the Centennial Exposition, where a gold medal was awarded for the superior excellence of the goods. Some fifteen hundred different articles were mounted upon twelve French walnut boards, seven feet by four, which were placed in a case forty-six feet long, surmounted by ebony and black walnut fronts and surrounded by a heavy bronze railing with an elaborately-ornamental bronze post at one end. All the metal work was done by P. & F. Corbin, including a bronze metal mantel costing about seven hundred dollars.

A less elaborate exhibit in Philadelphia, in 1856, won an award "For Cabinet and House Trimming Goods."

In November of 1876, the brick building erected by North & Stanley on the site of the little ell-shaped structure first occupied by P. & F. Corbin on the present premises was purchased to provide needed room for some of the departments. In June of the following year, the pattern room was moved to the new building, an event which the men therein employed thought worthy of celebration. The *New Britain Observer* of June 26, 1877, contains the following account of the affair:

"The workmen in the pattern room of P. & F. Corbin's factory last Thursday tendered to their employers and several others, mostly workmen in the same shop, a complimentary dinner and clam bake, at Traut's Park, to celebrate their removal from their old quarters to more commodious ones in

the lower story of the end of the building formerly occupied by North & Stanley.

"The dinner itself was a grand success — Prentice superintended the chowder part and Henry Goodrich overlooked the preparation of the remainder of the feast in a manner which was very creditable to his skill. Roast oysters, clams, broiled chickens, and numerous other delicacies were served on a long table spread in the dancing pavilion until the guests were obliged to cry for mercy, when another detachment took their places, and yet there was plenty left. After the dinner was served the whole party adjourned to the meadow in the rear of the grove, and divided into sides, under the leadership of Charles Wetmore and Willis Lamb, and began a game of baseball, which was not the least amusing feature of the day's enjoyment. We append the score:

	O.	R.		O.	R.
"Lamb,	0	2	Wetmore,	1	1
Spring,	1	0	F. Corbin,	1	2
P. Corbin,	1	0	A. Corbin,	1	1
Tolles,	2	0	Peck,	1	2
Arnold,	2	1	Ginder,	3	0
Case,	0	3	C. Corbin,	0	2
Spencer,	1	2	Quinn,	3	0
Atkinson,	3	0	Hart,	2	1
Judd,	1	2	Vance,	1	0
Scripture,	1	2	H. Corbin,	1	1
Wilford,	1	2	Sparks,	2	0
Seymour,	1	1	A. Arens,	1	1
Clemments,	2	0	Thompson,	0	1
Parsons,	1	0	Joy,	2	0
Widmayer,	3	0	Jost,	1	0
Holmes,	1	0	Hull,	1	1
Total,	21	15	Total,	21	13"

In the latter '70's, a very extensive and profitable business was done in nickel plated cast-iron stove trimmings — knobs, hinge pins, turn keys, damper handles, rail and urn tips, blower handles, etc. The major portion of the goods were cast in the Corbin foundry, but large quantities were sent here to be plated. After a time, the larger stove foundries made their own knobs and the profit in these goods was greatly reduced, when the line was dropped. "Billy" Wolf, then employed in the office, made a fully illustrated mimeograph



CHARLES E. WETMORE,
TREASURER

catalogue, in April of 1879, which is a model of neatness and doubtless was a valuable aid in selling the goods.

The universal practice at this time was to pay factory employees once a month, reserving two weeks' pay, and workmen were sometimes badly in need of money before pay day arrived. In many factories when workmen were advanced money between pay days five per cent. was deducted for prepayment. Superintendent Spring kept a sum of money in his office and it was his practice to advance small sums to the Corbin workmen, turning in a memorandum of the amounts before pay day in order that they might be deducted. Later, the number of workmen became so great and the call for advances so frequent that the customary five per cent. deduction was made to check the frequent demands, but Mr. Philip Corbin did not approve of the practice, and in March of 1879 inaugurated the system of weekly payment with one week in reserve. The workmen had made no request for such a change, and had made no complaint of the previous conditions, and the departure came as a welcome surprise. On the night that the announcement of the new system was made, hundreds of the workmen assembled in the square before the Humphrey House, a band was engaged, transparencies and commemorative banners hastily constructed and a procession formed which marched to the residence of Philip Corbin to testify to their appreciation of the new order of things. A weekly pay roll was then generally regarded as an experiment, and the daily papers mentioned the event guardedly, as a matter of doubtful expediency.

In the decade of 1870–80 six general catalogues were issued—1870, 1871, 1872, 1874, 1876, 1878—each larger than its predecessor, the 1878 book containing 834 pages of about the size of those in the 1895 edition. The frequent changes in prices made it advisable to omit lists and print them in a separate price book, a practice which has obtained since 1874. Lava knobs, in their day a leading article, were first shown in 1874; "copal bronzed" finish made its first appearance in 1874, and "amber bronzed" in 1878. Compressed wood knobs in a number of designs find space in the 1876 book, being bought from the makers and sold in conjunction with Corbin goods. Loose pin butts, axle pulleys, extension flush bolts, and lever handles are also first shown in the 1876 edition, together with the type of spring bolt like Corbin's S551, now being revived in some sections of the country. Espagniolette bolts first appear in 1878.

The style of ornamentation had not to this time been classified by school of design, but in 1878 the first Gothic design was introduced. This proved a

favorite, being sold in large quantities and used upon many of the finest buildings of that day, including the Hartford Capitol. A "Roman" and a "Grecian" design had been so named among the very first of the knobs and roses made, but the names were applied because one knob bore the head of a Roman soldier and the other that of Minerva, and not because of the school of the ornament.

All the figures were in low-relief, and the ornament was formed of scrolls and sprays, after the fashion of the adornment of Corbin's No. 52 butt, No. 1215 drawer pull, No. 3072 chest handles, and Nos. 1279 and 1280 bird-cage hooks.

In 1879, the manufacture of cabinet locks was decided upon. Prior to that time nothing in the way of cabinet locks had been made by the company, but now plans were made to cover this particular field with the same thoroughness that had been displayed in other directions.



CATALOGUES, 1870–1880

Up to 1880, the capital stock of the company had remained Fifty Thousand Dollars, the capitalization at the time the corporation was formed. The large sums which had been taken from the earnings and reinvested in land, buildings, and equipment made the amount of capital stock inadequate, and on February 26, 1880, it was voted to increase the capital stock to Five Hundred Thousand Dollars, the stockholders subscribing for the new issue in proportion to their holdings. The officers of the company had been satisfied

with small salaries and the dividends to stockholders had been kept low, in order to provide the necessary funds for expansion, and every dollar of the capital stock was covered by tangible assets.

With the increase in capital stock came a partial reorganization of the company. A new charter was procured, better suited to the enlarged scope of the business, and duly accepted by the stockholders. The number of directors was increased to seven, the new board consisting of Philip and Andrew Corbin, Oliver Stanley, N. G. Miller, John B. Talcott, E. Strickland, and George S. Scott. Prior to this time, shipments to the territory outside of New England had been made from the New York store, a stock being sent there from which orders were filled, but it was found to be cheaper, with the improved transportation facilities, to make shipments direct from the factory, and only such goods were sent to New York as were required for the needs of the local trade. Sales to the territory outside of New York's legitimate field were made from New Britain thereafter, and the accounts transferred to this office.

Every part of the business prospered. New goods were added as fast as patterns and tools could be made. A government contract for letter box locks and keys was secured, and a post-office business thus begun, and the entire line of cabinet locks rapidly developed. The old round,

> "The duck eats the worm;
> The man eats the duck;
> The worm eats the man;
> The duck eats the worm,"

found its counterpart in the way in which the manufacture of goods was urged, that from the profits thus gained the plant might be increased, that more goods might be made, that a larger profit might be reinvested in new buildings and equipment. The story of the ten years between 1880 and 1890 is a successive mention of new buildings erected and filled and a steady enlargement of the field of manufacture.

In 1880, a wooden foundry building, 80 x 100 feet, was built in the rear of Philip Corbin's residence. This same year a four arc light electric lighting machine was installed in the new foundry, being one of the first equipments of the kind in a New England factory. Two ten-light machines followed in 1881, and additions have been made since, until the entire factory is lighted with electricity, which is also employed in running machinery in locations where the steam power plant cannot be economically used.

On March 23d, E. Strickland resigned as director, to be succeeded by

Darius Miller, who, on February 15, 1882, gave place to A. S. Chase. On the same last-named date George S. Scott was succeeded as director by R. D. Hubbard.

In 1882, the cabinet lock business was sold to the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co., a new corporation organized to carry forward the development of this branch to its fullest capacity for growth, and to give it the special attention it could not receive as an adjunct to P. & F. Corbin's builders' hardware business. At this point P. & F. Corbin's connection with this branch of industry ceases, although the relations between the two companies have ever since been of the closest character, the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co. occupying buildings rented from P. & F. Corbin, and the buying, financing, etc., being done in P. & F. Corbin's office. The first board of directors consisted of Philip Corbin, Andrew Corbin, Charles Peck, N. G. Miller, J. M. Spring, F. W. Mix, and John B. Talcott. The officers were the same as those of P. & F. Corbin. F. W. Mix, the superintendent, had formerly filled a similar position for a company making cabinet locks and brought to the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co. a large experience in this line. Later, George W. Corbin, a son of Waldo Corbin, a former director of P. & F. Corbin, assumed the management of the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co. and was made its secretary, Philip Corbin being still the president, and Andrew Corbin, vice-president. The business has become the largest in the country in its line. More styles of keys and key blanks, padlocks, and cabinet locks of all kinds are made than are made by any of its competitors, and it still pursues the Corbin policy of extending its scope as fast as developments in the trade and the call for new goods will permit. Any one of its principal lines of manufacture will outclass the competing goods of any company making one line only, and even more easily distances other competitors.



GEORGE W. CORBIN

At the time of the incorporation of the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co., P. & F. Corbin had no room at their disposal for the new company. To keep the business in New Britain it was decided to erect and rent to them a building suitable to their needs and accordingly such a building was built of brick, on Orchard Street and Park Street, just across Orchard Street from P. & F. Corbin's



ALBERT N. ABBE,
SECRETARY

factory. Work was begun at once. By the first of May the residence occupied by Mr. Philip Corbin had been moved away; by the middle of May a large force of men was at work; August 1st found the brick work done; before the middle of October the machinery was going in, and by the middle of November the flagstaff with its gilt weather vane was in place.

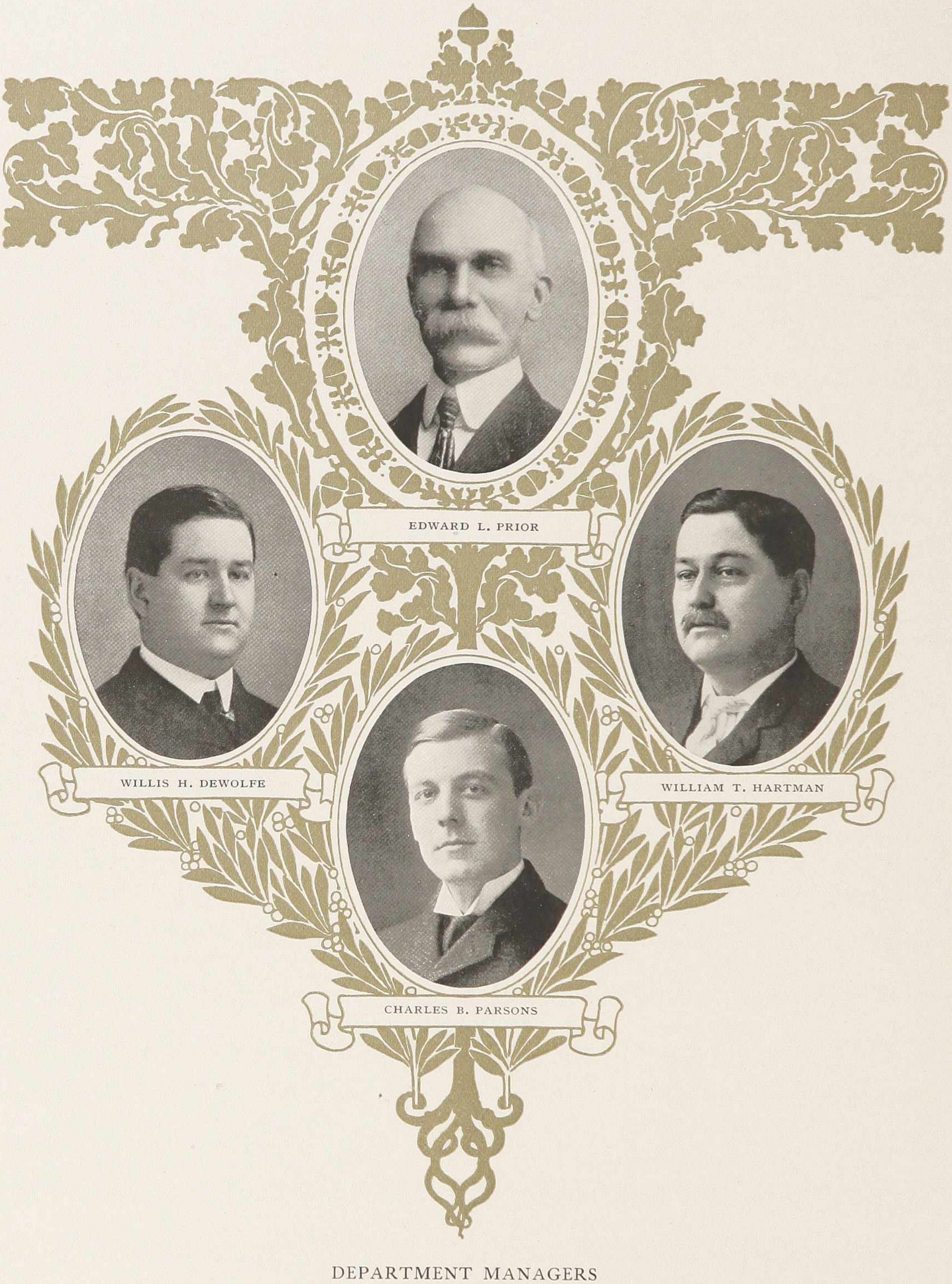
In 1885, P. & F. Corbin built an addition to the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co.'s building, extending along Orchard Street for two hundred feet, and increased the height of the building erected in 1882. In 1891, another addition was made, extending the building along Park Street to Maple with an ell upon Maple Street. It now occupies all of the building along Park Street, from Orchard to Maple Street, the Maple Street extension, all the connecting buildings on the east side of Orchard Street, as well as a large building in Kensington, a few miles away, where an extensive business in post-office equipments is conducted.

Mr. George W. Corbin has been the manager of the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co. since its organization, and secretary since 1896, and the astonishing rapidity with which it has gained the foremost place in every branch of its business is due to his untiring energy and business sagacity, and the support given him by Philip and Andrew Corbin, as president and vice-president of the company. Mr. George W. Corbin is a wide-minded business man, with the generous instincts and the pluck and determination which are prominent traits of the Corbin family. Under his able leadership the company is assured of a growth in the future greater than that of the past as his present facilities are greater than those of the first years. Two of his brothers are associated with him, Albert F. Corbin as superintendent, and William Corbin in charge of the orders and shipments.

At the annual meeting on February 22, 1883, Charles Peck presented his resignation, after twenty-five years of service.

On March 14, 1883, Mr. S. C. Dunham was elected to the office in his stead. A year later (March 3, 1884), R. D. Hubbard, a director, died, and at the next following annual meeting Charles Miller, one of the present board of directors, was elected.

The 1885 catalogue contains little in the way of new articles, but much in the way of improvement. Locks with "steamboat" stops, like the present No. 1230¼, appear for the first time, and a considerable improvement in mechanism has been made. In ornamental trimmings a much larger assortment is shown, with greater variety in design, some of which are classified by school, as Gothic



DEPARTMENT MANAGERS

and bas-relief, and others by arbitrary names, as "Cushion," "Brocade," "Venetian," and "Diagonal," the last named being the only one to survive the changes made since that time. Plain square or round shapes with bevel edges appear and there is less exaggeration in outline. A great many of the lock fronts are ornamented. Transom rods are listed and improvements in sash fasteners are evident. The list of finishes has grown to five on iron and seventeen upon bronze, all designated by number.

On February 19, 1885, N. G. Miller, director, was succeeded by James Bates, who served for one year, he being succeeded by James Bolter.

In 1886, the roof of the old main building was raised one story. The same year, in order to secure more room, the foundry of the Taylor Manufacturing Company was leased. This, however, did not prove a satisfactory arrangement, the men not having room to place their molds properly, and in 1887 the property of the Francis Manufacturing Company on Stanley Street, now known as the P. & F. Corbin "Annex," was bought. The land consists of 13½ acres, with a frontage on the railroad nearly one-third of a mile in length. There were upon it a brick foundry 140 feet long, a one-story wooden building 175 feet long, and some smaller wooden buildings. The place was not occupied until early in 1889. There was a stationary engine in the place. A new porcupine boiler was put in and the buildings equipped with steam heat.

In 1886, S. C. Dunham was succeeded as secretary by Oliver Stanley. Mr. Dunham's services were largely of a legal and advisory nature and his advice is still sought frequently in affairs of moment. He is auditor for the company, in which capacity he has served since 1887.

The two-hundred horse-power engine bought in 1868 had furnished all the power required in the Corbin plant up to this time. When it was installed only eighty horse power were required to move the machinery, but with the constant additions the load had increased until it was very apparent that more power would be required. Another and larger engine had been bought for the Corbin Cabinet Lock Company's building, but was not yet in use. On July 11th the piston rod of the engine buckled under the strain. Engineer Scott and his assistant happened to be watching the engine at the time and each leaped through a door just before the place was filled with steam and wrecked by the breaking engine.

A "council of war" was held in the office.

"How long will it take to repair the damage?" asked Superintendent Spring. Master mechanic Cromwell Case thought it would take two or three

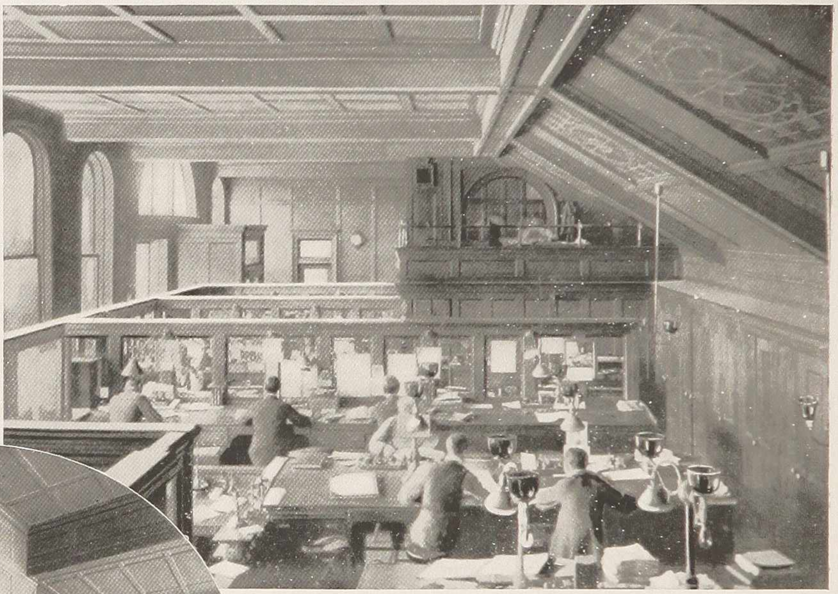
weeks at the least to set the new Cabinet Lock engine in the place of the smashed one. Engineer Scott thought it might be done in two weeks. Mr. Spring didn't see how he could let the factory stand idle for so long a time.

"If you say so," said Mr. Scott, "we'll do it in one week."

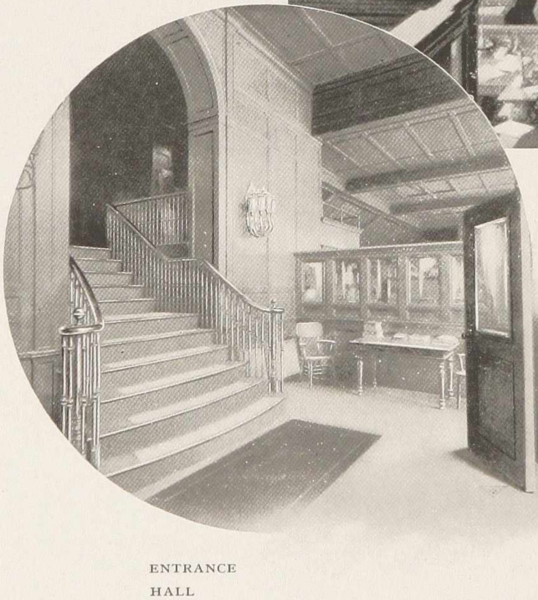
"Then I say so, of course," was the reply.

Two days were allowed for clearing away the debris, two for preparing a new bed and two for putting in the new engine. The men worked in gangs, every hour of the twenty-four being employed, and a Sunday intervening helped on the time, so that at the end of the week the new engine was running. The engine-room was over a bit of old marsh and the new bed oscillated considerably on its uncertain foundation, but the engine did its work without a hitch until relieved.

On May 1, 1888, the working hours were changed. Previously the working day began at half-past six in the morning and ended at half-past five in the afternoon, with an hour's intermission at noon. The other factories in town had made a change, beginning at seven o'clock and closing at six, as at present, and P. & F. Corbin conformed to the general practice.

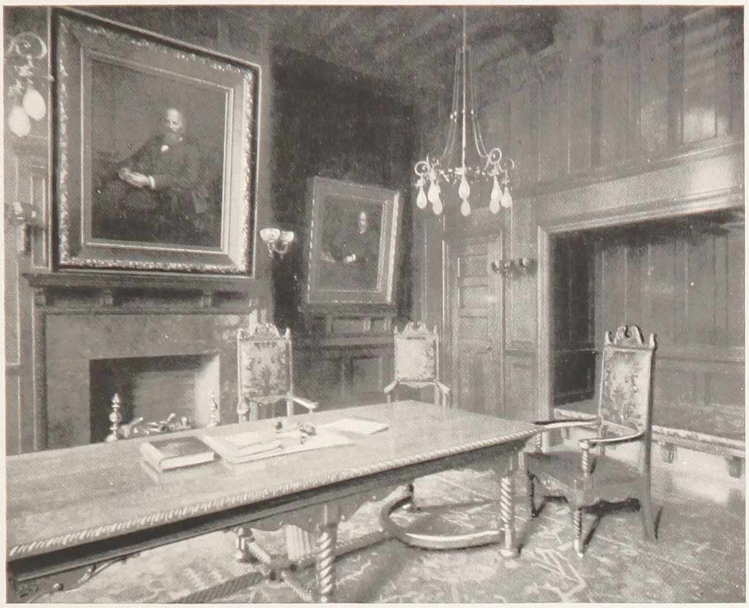


COUNTING ROOM



ENTRANCE HALL

More buildings! more machinery! more goods resulting from increased equipment. A planer,



DIRECTORS' ROOM

weighing 8,800 pounds, a belt 140 feet long and twenty-nine inches wide, a six-inch main shaft, and a one-hundred horse-power boiler, are among the articles in the way of equipment thought worthy of record by local chroniclers. A six-story brick structure, 140 feet long and 45 feet wide, was built on the west side of Orchard Street in 1888, together with a 50 x 45-foot wing at the south end. Other minor changes were made about the works to give more room and a better arrangement.

In 1889, a display was made at the Paris Exposition, securing the highest award — a gold medal.

At the annual stockholders' meeting, in February of 1891, Chas. H. Parsons, the present second vice-president, was elected as a director. Mr. Parsons has been identified with the company since 1873, at which time he left Landers, Frary & Clark to take a position as traveling saleman for P. & F. Corbin, covering New England and Canada. He was only on the road for a part of the time, and when in the house devoted his attention to the order department. In 1879 or 1880, when the care of the general trade was transferred to New Britain, Mr. Parsons left the road and took charge of the orders, a man named Henry E. Collis billing the goods to the former New York customers and Henry A. Bailey charging the goods to the New England trade.

As the work grew, a constantly-increasing load of responsibility was laid upon Mr. Parsons. When Mr. Dunham became secretary, much of the work which had previously been done by Charles Peck, the former secretary, devolved upon him. He gradually assumed entire charge of the sales department and to-day has in hand the marketing of the product of the Corbin factory and the issuance of its catalogues.

Although Mr. Parsons' home duties are arduous, he still finds time to visit

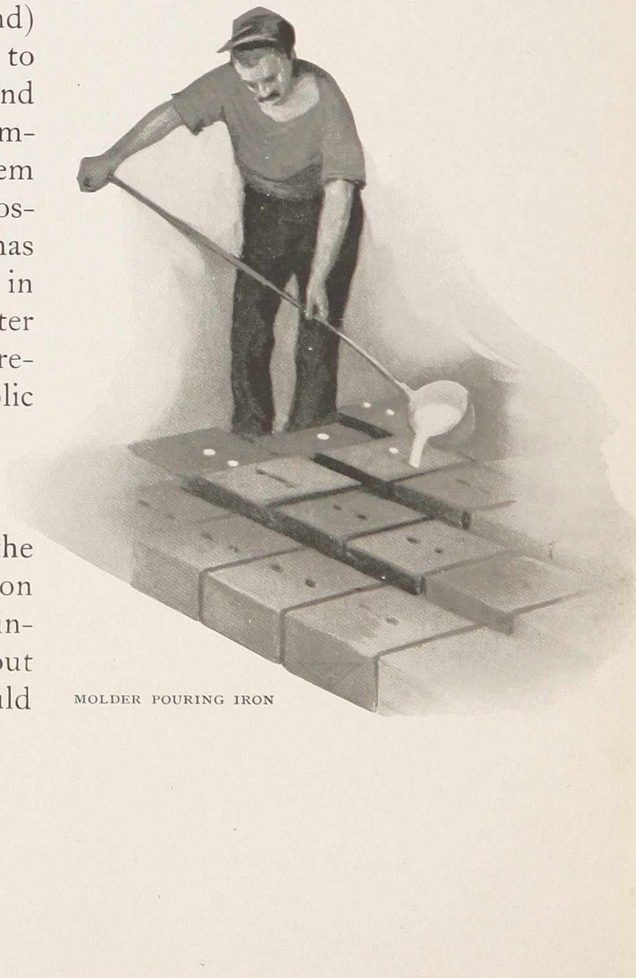


MOLDERS AT WORK

at intervals the most important cities east of the Rocky Mountains, and thus maintains a personal acquaintance with the company's principal customers and their needs. In fact, there are few men connected with the hardware manufacturing interests of the country who are as well known as he. Keen, forceful, quick to decide upon a course of action, and untiring in his efforts to accomplish any task to which he has set his hand, he represents a high type of New England character.

In 1891, it was decided to provide for an adequate water supply independent of the city system. An attempt to procure water by digging an artesian well had not resulted satisfactorily and it was found advisable to purchase Rhodes' pond (now known as Corbin's pond) on the edge of the city and lay mains to connect the pond with the works. A bond of $25,000 was given the city as an indemnity against possible damages, and a system was laid, insuring the company against possibility of a water famine. In fact, it has since then come to the relief of the city in time of need, although the magnificent water system provided for the city by the forethought of Philip Corbin and other public spirited citizens renders it safe from trouble in this regard for many years.

With its own water system, it only needed a Corbin fire department to give the factory an independent means for protection against fire. Slight blazes had occurred at intervals, always being extinguished without great loss, but the disastrous effects that would



MOLDER POURING IRON

follow a fire of any magnitude in the big plant, coupled with the increased liability resulting from the increase in number of men and multiplication of processes, induced the company to inaugurate a private fire system. Standpipes were placed through the buildings, with hose arranged to cover all the floor space; a powerful fire pump was provided; hydrants were set at frequent intervals about the buildings and hose carriages were provided, with a complete equipment for each. A fire alarm system with call boxes upon every floor was put in place and two separate fire companies in the shops organized and drilled. This department has, upon a number of occasions, rendered valuable service, saving loss and preventing conflagrations from becoming general where a force of men less intimately acquainted with the premises and with an equipment brought in from outside could not hope to accomplish as much. Automatic sprinklers are now placed throughout the factory, with sprinkler heads at intervals of ten feet. A stream can be thrown from the ground onto or over any building on the premises. Seventeen streams can be thrown at once upon a fire and the pumping stations can deliver over 3,500 gallons of water per minute.

In 1891, a small addition was made to the west end of the main building, to provide offices for the shippers and the estimating department. In 1893, the building on the west side of Orchard Street was extended to its present length. At the annual meeting in 1892 the office of vice-president was created and Mr. Andrew Corbin elected to fill it, thus being officially associated with his brother in the management of the business, as he had been in reality for many years.

The need for an office was urgent. More attention had been paid to properly housing the productive portion of the business than that of the management, and the office force had long outgrown its quarters. As far back as 1882 the directors had been authorized to erect an office building, and the matter had been a frequent topic of conversation. When the time came for building an office, Mr. Philip Corbin selected the site, directly in front of the main building, between the east and west wings and extending to the sidewalk on Park Street, and what was at the time the finest factory office in the country was built thereon by a prominent firm of New York architects. The entire interior was paneled in quartered oak. Separate offices were provided for the general officers and sales manager, and a directors' room furnished in a style that made it one of the show places of the locality. The general offices were separated into departments by divisions of paneled oak and plate glass and every good device known in the way of an aid to business was installed. It was an

office well worthy of the interests it housed. In June of 1893 the building was ready for occupancy.

At the annual meeting of stockholders on the 27th of the following February there occurred one of those incidents which make life pleasant and occur all too rarely. At the conclusion of the formal order of business, Mr. John B. Talcott reviewed briefly the history of the company as it had come within his knowledge as a director for forty years, attributing the growth and prosperity of its business to the wise management of the president and founder, Philip Corbin, ending with a motion that a life-size portrait of Mr. Corbin be provided for the directors' room. The motion was warmly seconded by Mr. A. J. Sloper. Mr. Philip Corbin deprecated the prominence given him in the premises and in turn placed the credit upon his co-workers, Andrew Corbin, his brother, and John M. Spring, the superintendent. The stockholders, in accordance with Mr. Corbin's wish, included these gentlemen in his motion and the portraits were ordered procured. In the directors' meeting following, Charles H. Parsons, J. B. Talcott, and Charles E. Wetmore were made a committee to take the matter in charge. Artist A. J. Conant of New York was engaged to paint the pictures, which are marvelous in their fidelity to the originals and in their life-like coloring. They now hang upon the walls of the directors' room and those who once see them do not forget them.



BRASS MOLDER POURING

The changes that had taken place in the builders' hardware business between the issuance of the general catalogue of 1885 and the one of 1895 next following were many. The character of the ornamentation of the house trimmings had undergone a transformation, and these goods were now classified according to school of design. The irregular outlines had nearly disappeared; new articles had been added, such as hinge plates, bar sash lifts, and push buttons, and, in fact, the business had arrived at about the basis upon which

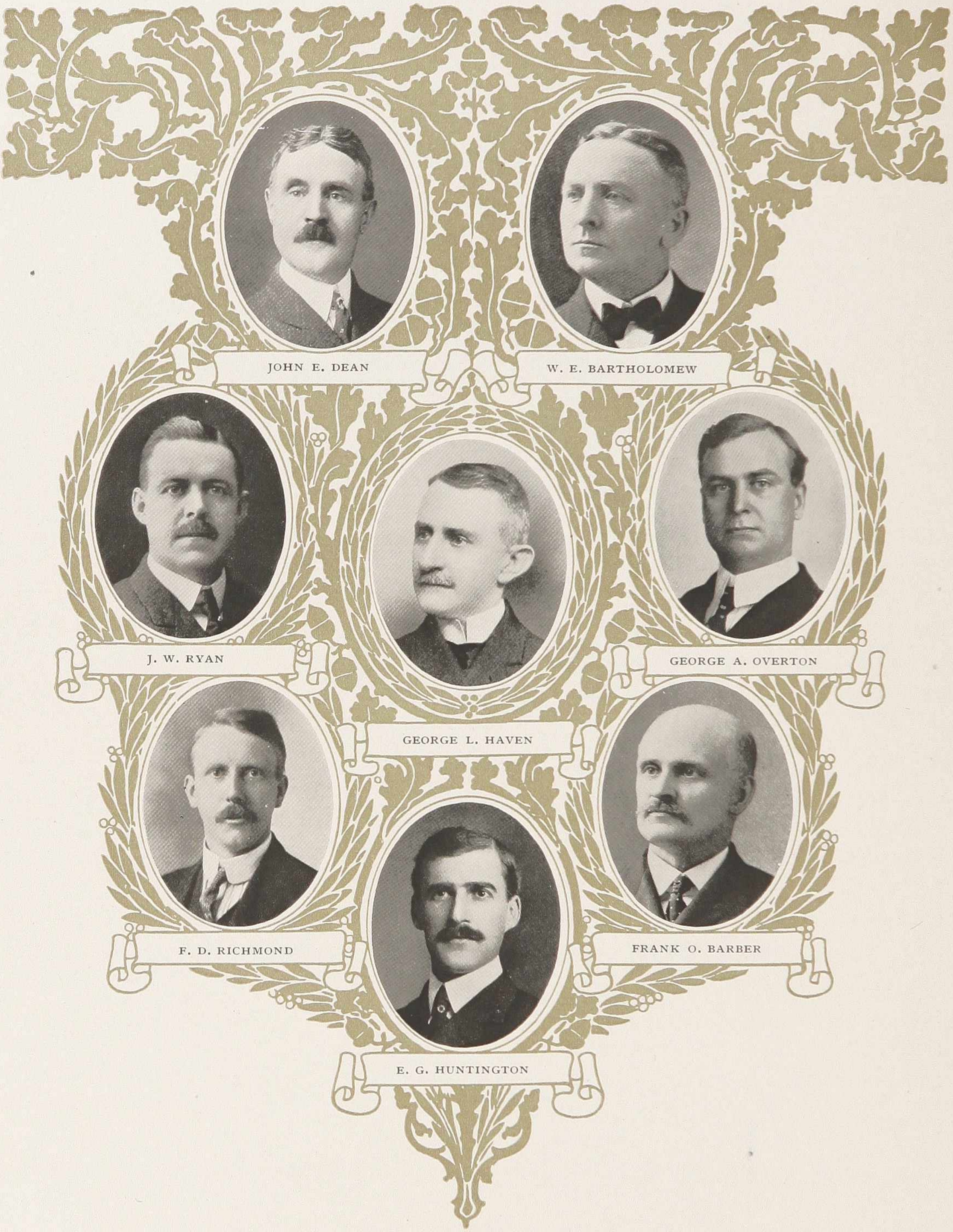
it stands to-day, except for the natural expansion of the past nine years of growth. Pin-tumbler locks had been added with the distinguishing trade-mark or name of "Harvard." The Gilfillan door check had been introduced and was being superseded by the Corbin check, invented by Cromwell O. Case, master mechanic of the Corbin factories. This check, with its double piston arrangement and consequent lessened friction, its ease of adjustment and perfect working qualities has never been equaled, and is the standard in the market to-day. Locks showed a clearer division into types with different functions for different styles of doors, indicating a close study of the adaptability of the goods to the various requirements.



ELECTROPLATER

In 1893, land was secured on the north side of Park Street and fronting the present factory, and in 1895 work was begun upon the largest single building operation that had as yet been undertaken. In 1896, the present north-side plant was finished. The top story of the main building is occupied by an iron foundry, with floor space for ten thousand flasks. The placing of a foundry of this character in such an elevated position is an innovation in factory practice which has proven of value. The goods are thus begun at the top of the factory and progress with a minimum of handling from one floor down to the next until they arrive at the packing and shipping rooms on the ground floor. A bridge across Park Street connects the north-side building with the main factory, and a tunnel beneath the street affords another means of communication.

The electric plant of the factory is also located on the north side of the street. The lighting plant contains over 175 arc and 4,000 incandescent lights and has capacity for a larger number if needed. At the time when the first machines were installed, the Thomson-Houston works were located in New Britain, this industry being then in its infancy. A thirty arc light machine built here is still running and giving satisfactory service. It has been found easier and cheaper to use electricity in some portions of the Corbin plant, where steam


JOHN E. DEAN
W. E. BARTHOLOMEW
J. W. RYAN
GEORGE L. HAVEN
GEORGE A. OVERTON
F. D. RICHMOND
FRANK O. BARBER
E. G. HUNTINGTON

SALESMEN

could not be carried without loss of efficiency, and motors are set in various places where needed, and run by electricity generated in the company's plant.

In 1896, A. S. Chase, a director of the company, died, and resolutions expressive of his associates' regrets were passed and recorded.

At the directors' meeting in 1897, immediately following the stockholders' meeting, Mr. C. E. Wetmore, now treasurer of the company, was elected director to fill the vacancy created by the death of Mr. Chase. Mr. Wetmore first entered the Corbin office as a boy in April of 1871, later having charge of the invoices. When the estimating department was created in 1874, with Willis G. Lamb in charge, Mr. Wetmore was transferred to it, later succeeding to its management in 1880, when Mr. Lamb left to engage in silver mining. Mr. Wetmore was in charge of this department at the time of his election as secretary, but in 1896 he was made superintendent, it being evident that Mr. Spring would never recover from his illness, and turned over the estimating department to Mr. Willis H. DeWolfe, the present assistant secretary, who has been identified with it since first entering the company's employ in 1889.

Thus Mr. Wetmore has been identified with the company from boyhood, and is an expert in all departments — both in estimating costs and in manufacturing, and during the summer of 1903 was promoted by a vote of the directors to the responsible position of treasurer of the corporation, a position which he ably fills at the present time.

Previous to this time the secretary of P. & F. Corbin had also served as secretary of the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co., but Mr. George W. Corbin was now made secretary of this latter company.

In this same year (1897) Mr. W. S. Judd, who had charge of the order department, resigned to become New Britain's postmaster, and C. B. Parsons, a son of Mr. C. H. Parsons, succeeded him. He still is at the head of this department, which has grown to several times its former size in the past eight years. New systems for caring for the work have been devised and the department has been organized on a scale that enables it to care for the immense volume of detail it is required to handle.

In addition to his duties in the order department, Mr. C. B. Parsons has been able to assist his father in the sales department, and has an intimate knowledge of the complicated line of goods and their sale and use which is of constantly-increasing value to the company.

In 1898, two changes were made in the line of goods, the results of which are so far-reaching and so important that their full effect cannot, at the present,

be fully determined. One of these consisted in improvements in the Harvard pin-tumbler locks; first, by introducing ball bearings to eliminate friction, and second, by placing two concentric locking cylinders within a single shell, giving the effect of two separate locks in one, permitting the use of two keys with different changes and vastly multiplying the capability of the locks in master-keying. The use of the master-key has become so general in buildings with several tenants that this invention is of constantly-increasing value.

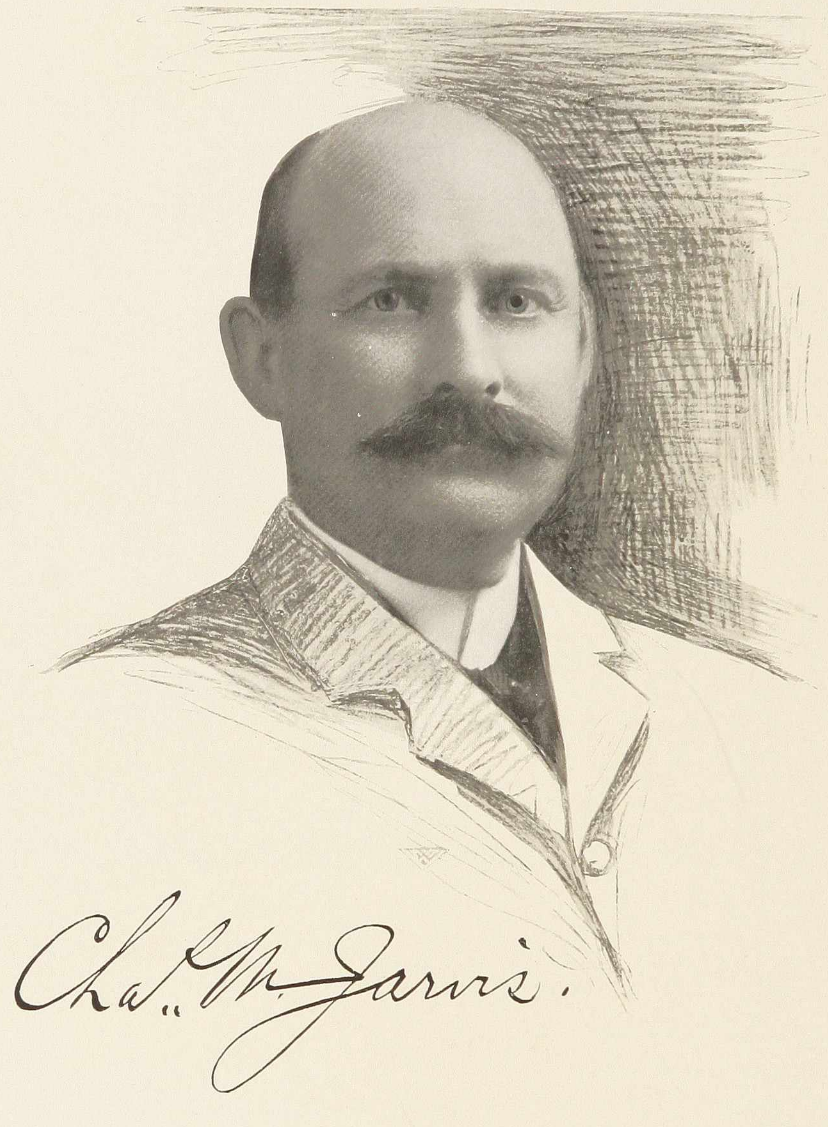
The other invention is even more important. Locks have been made for thousands of years, and constant efforts have been made to improve them, but so far as the recorded history of the art of locksmithing tells, all improvements have come gradually and the evolution of a new idea could be traced by a series of changes from the old to the new condition. It remained for Hon. Byron Phelps, former mayor of Seattle, Washington, and ex-treasurer of the county, to evolve a new type of lock and to bring it forth complete, with the generic idea fully developed and the form established. In June, 1898, he came to P. & F. Corbin from across the country to find a manufacturer to produce his device. The value of the new lock was at once recognized and the control of the invention secured.



BYRON PHELPS

In effect, the invention consists in a lock set, in which all the parts, including knobs and escutcheons, are attached firmly to a single frame, all parts being connected at the factory, and not necessarily disturbed thereafter. Incidentally, as a result of this method of lock-construction, a number of valuable features are incorporated in these "Unit" locks, among them being the removal of the key-work to the knob, the use of an original locking-cam on the inside knob shank, a close fitting adjustment and a simplicity in construction, that give an even, easy firmness of action that can be likened to nothing but a safe lock.

Locks of this type are made with functions to suit all purposes, and the Unit principle is gradually being extended to cover the entire field of lock-making. Its influence can hardly be overestimated at this time. It is certainly revolutionary in character and destined to create a new epoch in the manufacture of locks. The favor with which the Unit lock is received may be judged from the fact that it has the approval of every architect who has investigated it; has



CHARLES M. JARVIS,
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT
AMERICAN HARDWARE CORPORATION



BUILDING OPERATIONS

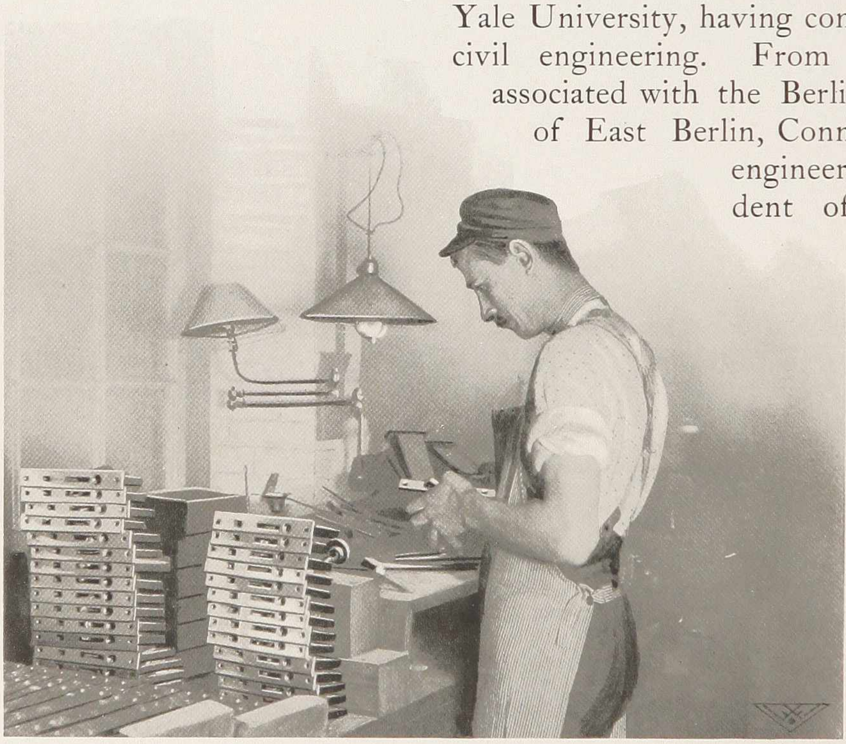
been specified for all the buildings of prominence recently constructed where the best of hardware was required, and is used upon fine structures in every city of the Union. Mr. Phelps holds twenty patents in the United States, covering different features of the Unit lock, as well as patents in France, England, and Germany.

In 1899, a large wing was added to the building on the west side of Orchard Street, to relieve the congested condition of many of the departments. In 1900, a larger addition was built on the east side of Orchard Street, with an ell on Pearl Street, to give the screw department room it very much needed. Both of these buildings were filled immediately upon completion and the clamor arose for more space to provide accommodations for increased facilities. The factory was months behind its orders, with every portion of the immense plant working to its fullest capacity. The demand for Corbin goods had grown faster than the ability to produce them, despite every effort to keep pace with the orders. The management of the company had its burdens greatly increased by this condition of affairs, and assistance was sought. The long-continued illness of Mr. Andrew Corbin, who had general charge of the mechanical department, threw a double load upon the superintendent, Mr. Wetmore, and in October, 1900, Mr. W. T. Hartman, the present superintendent, was appointed as his assistant, to attend to the detail of the manufacture of goods and urge through to completion the plans for expansion and improvement, Mr. Wetmore caring for the larger details and the manufacturing policy. Mr. Hartman was, prior to this time, foreman of the lock room, where he had been engaged for twenty-seven years, and his experience in handling a large force of men and in getting the largest results with the least loss of time and energy made him an unusually efficient man for such a position, and gave him an excellent training for his present duties as superintendent.

On March 13, 1901, Mr. Charles Glover was made a director of the P. & F.

Corbin company, to fill the place left vacant by the death of James Bolter of Hartford, thus adding to the directorate of the company another of the men actively engaged in its development. Both Philip and Andrew Corbin recognized that the time had come when they must have an associate in the management of the business who could plan with them for the extension of the business on a scale commensurate with its needs and take upon his shoulders the execution of the work. Consequently, when, in the summer of 1901, Charles Maples Jarvis of Berlin, Conn., resigned his position as vice-president of the American Bridge Co., and was thus free to consider another business connection, they sought his assistance. He was accordingly made the vice-president of the company, becoming actively connected with it on September 15, 1901, and, with his advent and the execution of plans promulgated by him or executed by the management with his aid, P. & F. Corbin entered upon a new epoch in its history.

Mr. Jarvis was born in Deposit, N. Y., April 6, 1856. He was educated in the public schools of Binghamton, N. Y., where his parents moved when he was two years old, and later graduated from the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University, having completed a course of civil engineering. From this time he was associated with the Berlin Iron Bridge Co. of East Berlin, Conn., first as a civil engineer and later as president of the company. When the American Bridge Co. purchased the Berlin company, Mr. Jarvis was made vice-president of the large corporation and placed in charge of the operating department. This office he resigned just before becoming identified



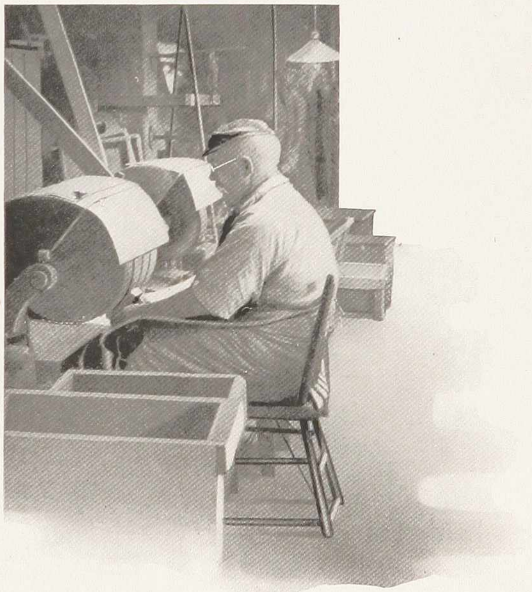
LOCKSMITH AT WORK



ASSEMBLER

with P. & F. Corbin. The position assumed by Mr. Jarvis in P. & F. Corbin's management is one for which his talents and previous training peculiarly fit him. He is accustomed to handling the organization of commercial forces upon a large scale and the creation of systems and methods to produce the largest results with the least waste of movement. The advanced methods of modern business find in him an earnest advocate, and many of the changes that have occurred since his connection with the company are directly traceable to him.

Another new building was planned, to be erected on the site of the brass foundry built in 1874, the size of the building to be approximately 200 x 60 feet and seven stories in height. Heretofore all the buildings had been built with heavy brick walls, strong enough to sustain the weight of the floors, some of them being as thick as thirty-six inches. In this new building, it was decided to use a steel frame with light walls, after the fashion of the modern skyscraper, and with large windows to give all the light possible. This building has been completed and is fully occupied. It is of slow-burning construction throughout, equipped with rapid elevators and modern in every detail. The top floor is used as a brass foundry, equipped with the most modern appliances. The additional space allowed a rearrangement of the departments in the main portion of the plant, which relieved the congestion, and has given every department room enough to carry on its work in comfort.



GRINDING AND POLISHING

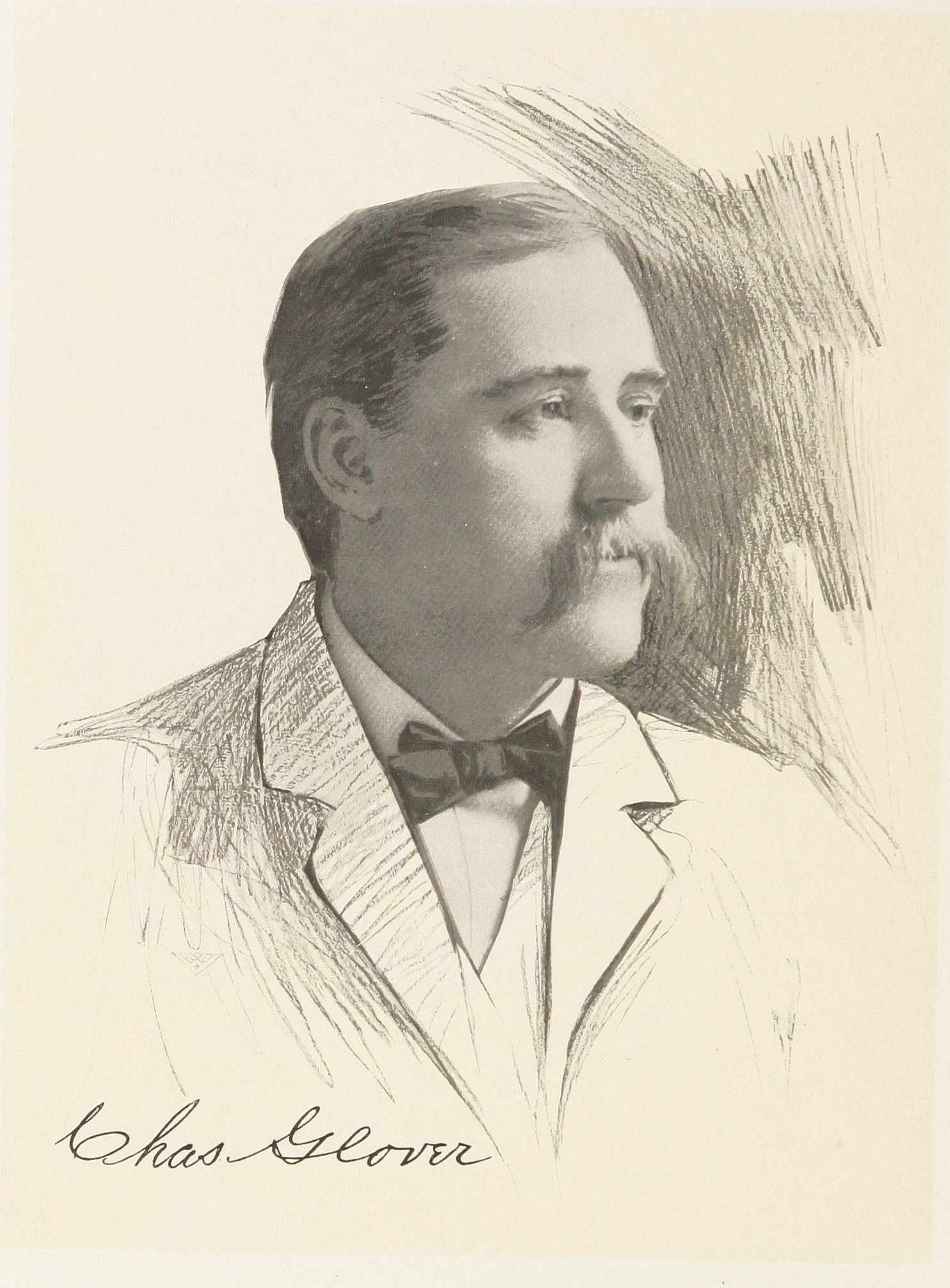
New times, new methods, new manners! There had been for several years occasional rumors of combinations of hardware manufacturers, which had been as regularly denied, until it was generally believed that P. & F. Corbin would

not entertain any proposition that would identify with this company the interests of any other. Therefore, when the announcement was made in the New Britain papers of February 24, 1902, that preparations were being made to merge P. & F. Corbin and the Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Company into one company, to be known as the American Hardware Corporation, the news occasioned much comment. Of all the possible combinations, this one seemed to the average New Britain citizen the least likely to occur, for the memory of old rivalries were still strong, but in reality it was the most reasonable of arrangements. Two immense plants, making goods of the same general character, can naturally be most economically managed by a single governing body; the advantage of combining the purchases to get the benefit of large quantities is manifest, the universal confidence in Philip Corbin's sagacity and business foresight, born of a long period of regular dividends to stockholders, in good times and bad, and the sight of the rapidly-growing factory—all combined to give the new movement favor with those interested—especially in view of the fact that when carefully analyzed it was found that the stock of the two concerns was owned very largely by the same people. Consequently, on March 13, 1902, the American Hardware Corporation was organized, this corporation owning every share of stock of P. & F. Corbin and the Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Company. The American Hardware Corporation is not a manufacturing corporation. It is simply a holding company and controls the management of both corporations; at the same time, each corporation has its own officers and directors and operates as a separate and independent plant corporation, as responsible to its customers to-day as it ever was.



PACKING GOODS

An important factor in the formation of the new company was the universal confidence



CHARLES GLOVER,
PRESIDENT
CORBIN SCREW CORPORATION

in the management of Philip Corbin, created by the success of the various enterprises with which he was associated, and the esteem in which he is held by his townspeople, by whom the greater portion of the stock of the two companies was owned. It was felt that any movement endorsed by Philip Corbin, and which he was willing to identify so closely with the interests of P. & F. Corbin, the company for the welfare of which he had spent his life, must be worthy of support, and it only needed Philip Corbin's consent to become the president to make it an extremely desirable move. The unanimity with which the stockholders of the two companies united to form the American Hardware Corporation was a personal endorsement of Mr. Philip Corbin's business career.

While the American Hardware Corporation governs the general policy of the constituent companies and directs its lines of activity, it leaves the details of the business to the department managers, just as under the old régime, and the customers thus get from P. & F. Corbin the same service and the same goods independent of any outside interference with trade relations. P. & F. Corbin's organization remains intact, with the same board of directors that it had before the American Hardware Corporation was formed.

At the annual stockholders' meeting on February 25, 1902, the offices of first vice-president, second vice-president, and assistant treasurer were created. Mr. Jarvis was made a director of the company, Mr. A. N. Abbe, purchasing agent for P. & F. Corbin, was also made a director, his intimate knowledge of the business making him a valuable addition to the governing board of the company.

Mr. Abbe has been connected with P. & F. Corbin since 1887, coming to New Britain from Meriden, where he had been engaged in the hardware business. At first he assisted in the bookkeeping, but was soon transferred to the purchasing department, where his knowledge of goods, prices, market tendencies and sources of supply were made of such value that later he was given charge of the purchases of all supplies and materials used. He has always taken a keen interest in the business in all its branches and his election as director was simply a fitting recognition of the value of his aid and advice. In July of 1902 he was made the purchasing agent of the American Hardware Corporation and has since added to his other duties those of traffic manager of that corporation and of secretary and plant manager of P. & F. Corbin.

On August 8, 1902, the general offices of P. & F. Corbin were gutted by fire, the factory fire companies succeeding, with great effort, in confining the

damage to this portion of the plant. It being vacation time, the officers of the company were absent, but Mr. Abbe took the matter in hand and in three days the entire interior of the office was rebuilt, painted, fitted with desks made in the factory joinery and the office force was at work in the old quarters. This quick action in an emergency is typical of the Corbin management. In May of the same year a wooden brass foundry burned, entailing a loss of several thousands of dollars. The need for castings was very great and every possible means was brought to bear to repair the damage, so that forty-eight hours after the fire the molders were back in their old quarters, "pouring off" the melted brass and bronze, with the carpenters working above and around them, finishing the new walls. In both instances gangs of men were at work tearing out the debris before the steam from the embers had ceased to rise, and the work went on without cessation until the damage was repaired. The same care is exercised at all times to see that the operating department has no hindrance in the production of goods, for with the immense trade and the rapid increase in business the importance of employing the full productive capacity is felt by all.



SHIPPING GOODS

The greatest need of P. & F. Corbin in 1902 was increased foundry facilities to provide castings for the enlarged factory. Accordingly, on September 9th, the directors empowered the management to build an iron foundry, 60 x 400 feet, upon the "Annex" property on Stanley Street. The work was pushed with all the speed possible and a large force of men is now employed in a commodious foundry equipped with the most modern devices.

On May 2, 1903, the Corbin Screw Corporation was organized as a subsidiary company of the American Hardware Corporation, to take charge of the manufacture of screws and screw products in the screw plants formerly belonging to P. & F. Corbin and the Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Company.

Both of these companies had large screw manufacturing departments which had been in operation for a little more than twenty-five years, and the industry had grown so important that it was thought best to sell the two plants to a new company who could specialize this business, and give it the separate and distinct attention its importance warranted and that would be best conducive to its growth. On July 1, 1903, the new company came into possession of the New Britain screw-making plant of P. & F. Corbin and the screw plants of Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Co., in New Britain, Conn., and Dayton, Ohio, and assumed charge of the screw business conducted therein.

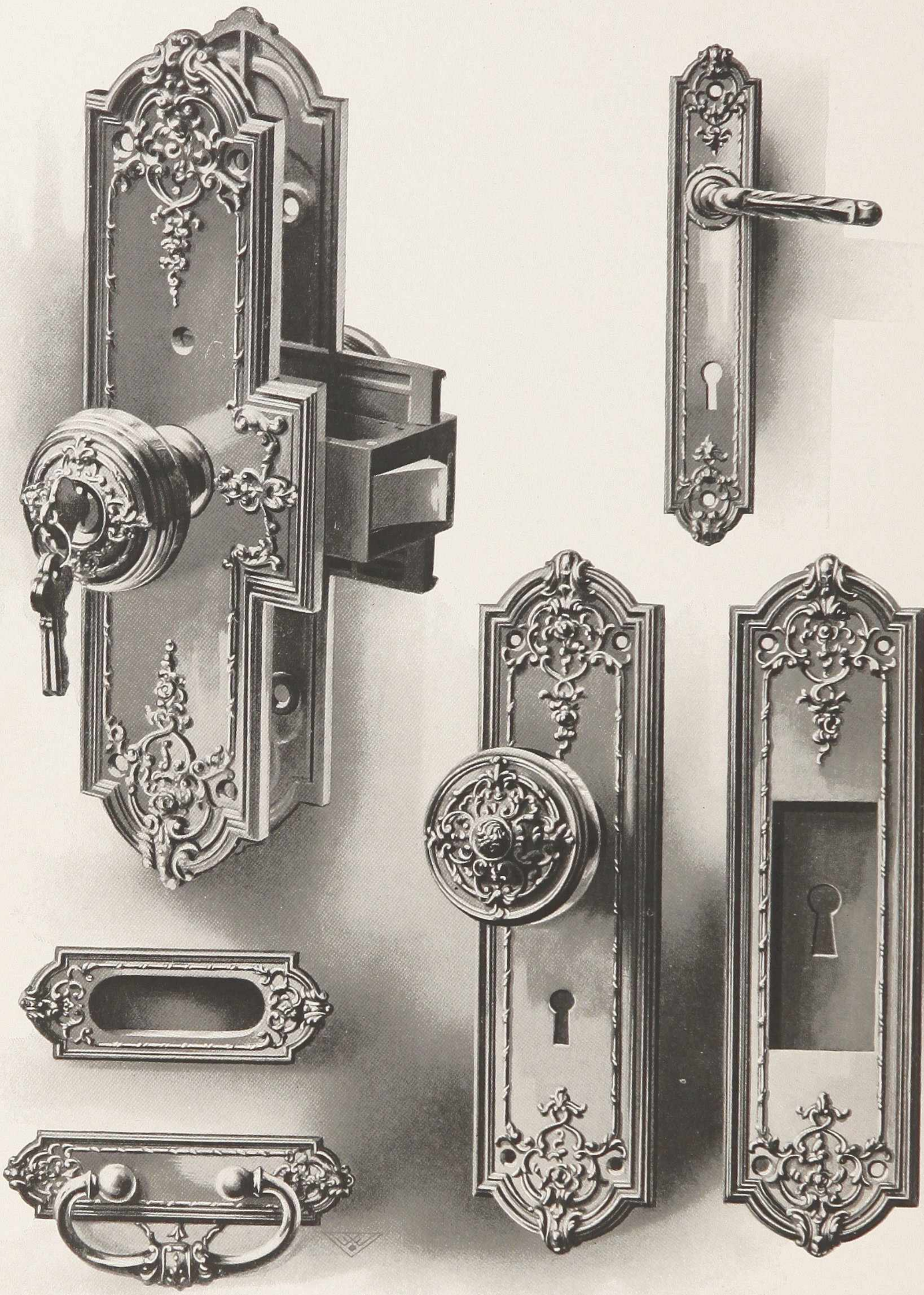
Mr. Charles Glover, a director of P. & F. Corbin, and formerly the manager of their screw department, is the president of this new corporation.

In 1876, when P. & F. Corbin decided to make the wood screws used with their goods, they purchased some screw machines which had formerly been used by Colter & Co., another Connecticut firm, the outfit consisting of sixteen machines. Mr. Glover, who was at that time working for the National Screw Company of Hartford, was engaged to take charge of these machines and conduct the manufacture of screws. The machines not proving satisfactory, Mr. Glover invented others to replace them, the first one being put in operation in 1877. Up to 1883, the screw department occupied quarters in the main building, but in 1884 it was moved to the east side of Park Street, next to the quarters occupied by the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co., where it has since remained.

On June 11, 1903, the Corbin Motor Vehicle Corporation was incorporated, to make motor vehicles at the Russell & Erwin plant of the American Hardware Corporation. Of this new company Philip Corbin is the president and Charles M. Jarvis the vice-president. A full list of the officers is given elsewhere.

Here ends this chronicle of the history of P. & F. Corbin, upon the fiftieth anniversary of the incorporation of the company. It is not the province of a historian to forecast the future, and, indeed, who can tell what the future may hold? The changes that have occurred in the past two or three years have materially altered the scope and the plan of the P. & F. Corbin's operations, and opened new avenues for extension and growth, of which full advantage will doubtless be taken, in accordance with the Corbin method for the past half-century, and he who runs will be able to read in passing events the story of the years to come.

What is the secret of P. & F. Corbin's growth and success? Opinions vary. Their associates all unite in saying that to Philip and Andrew Corbin, who have shouldered the responsibility and carried the burden of the manage-



ART HARDWARE

ment of the business, the credit should be ascribed; that the Corbin factories, the Corbin goods, the Corbin reputation and high standing in the markets are a monument to their ability as leaders and business men; Philip Corbin deprecates such statements and gives to his associates and subordinates who have executed the projects decided upon the credit they would give to him. The fact remains, that from the first inception of the business to the present day, Philip Corbin has been its active manager, carrying at some periods burdens of responsibility that it now seems incredible for one man to bear, and throughout all this time his will has been the directing force in the company's affairs. It is equally true that for thirty-two years his brother Andrew has stood at his side and that the two have worked with perfect unanimity in furthering P. & F. Corbin's interests, and that with the coming of Charles M. Jarvis the pace of progression has been wonderfully accelerated and new avenues opened.

It is also true that Philip Corbin has the faculty, common to men who are born to be leaders, of choosing the best men for the various work, and of entrusting them with the details of its execution and holding them responsible for results. If there are more potent factors than these they have escaped the notice of the writer of these pages. The old truism of "Given the man and the hour and all things are possible" is as true here as it always has been.

An analysis of the Corbin policy gives as the leading characteristics:

The development of every line to its fullest extent.

The introduction of new articles as soon as their value is demonstrated.

The manufacture of goods a little better than they need to be, and of considering their customers' best interests as well as their own.

The creation of values by turning into the business for its development the money earned therein.

A faith in the future that has resulted in plans on a large scale for needs yet to rise.

What this policy has wrought in the past we have seen; what it will bring forth in the future we shall know in due time. May its promulgation long continue at the hands of its originator, Mr. Philip Corbin!



NEW YORK SALESMEN

P. & F. CORBIN, New York, 1854–1897.
P. & F. CORBIN, of New York, 1897–1904.

The New York sales office of P. & F. Corbin was established in 1854, soon after the incorporation of the company, Mr. Frank Corbin leaving the New Britain office to assume charge.

A store was opened at No. 13 Gold Street, in what was then the heart of the hardware district, Frank Corbin assuming charge, assisted by his brother, George S. Corbin, then a lad. A stock of goods was carried from which shipments were made to customers, and all the trade outside of New England was cared for from this store, it thus becoming the principal sales center of the company.

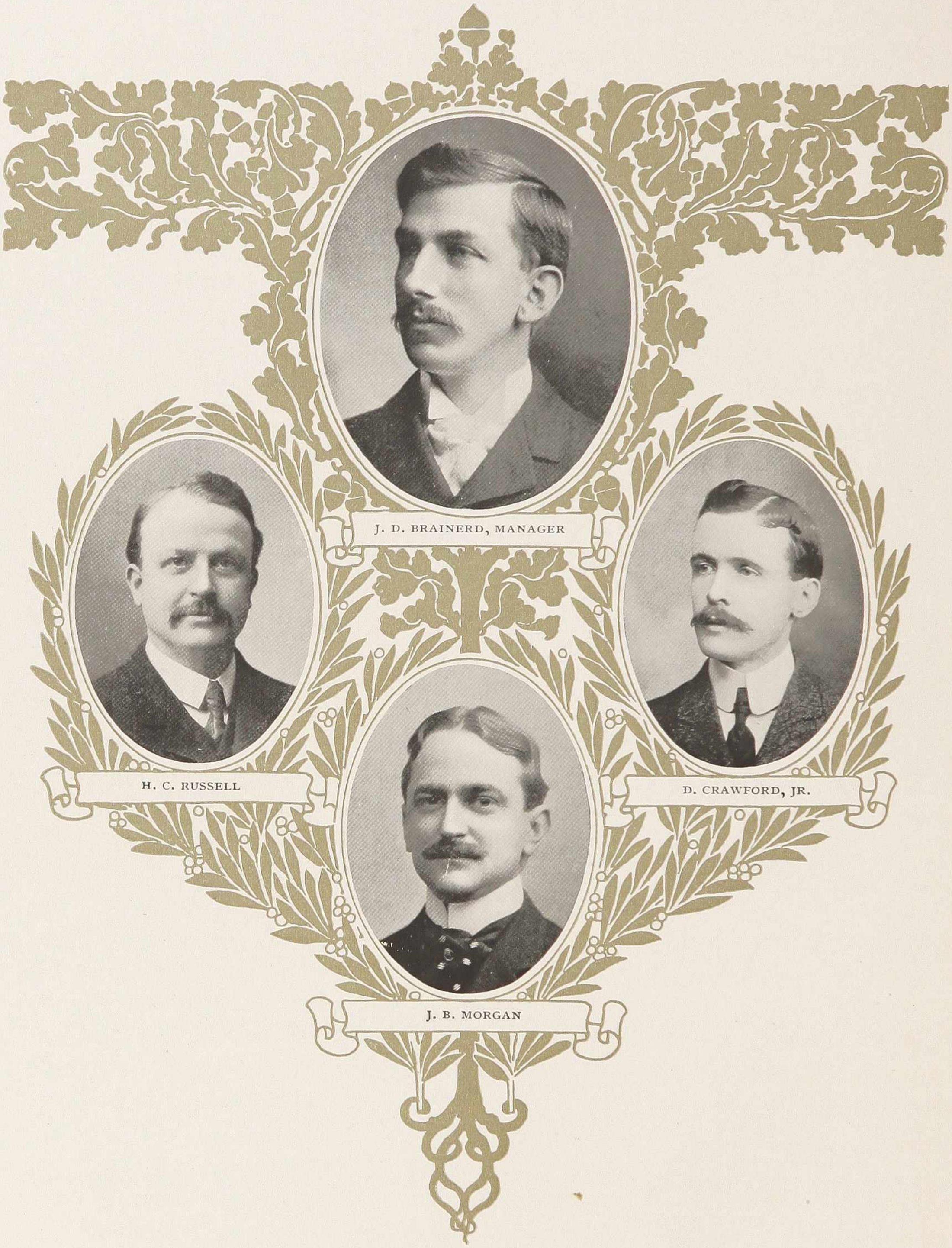
At the beginning, a show case perhaps seven feet square sufficed to display a complete line of samples of the Corbin goods. Two years later, the assortment had grown to fill show cases thirty feet in length.

Shortly before the Civil War began there was an exodus of the hardware trade to Beekman Street. At about the same time Frank Corbin left the company to embark in a different line of business, and in 1860 Andrew Corbin succeeded to the management of the store. In 1862, in conjunction with the Stanley Works, the first floor and basement of No. 57 Beekman Street were leased and the business was transferred to the new quarters.

At the close of the war, in 1865, it was found necessary to secure larger quarters, and the business was removed to No. 55 Beekman Street.

In 1872, Andrew Corbin left New York to assume the general management of the factory at New Britain, and George S. Corbin became the manager of the New York store, where he remained until his transfer later to the Philadelphia warehouse.

On May 1, 1882, P. & F. Corbin established offices at Nos. 24-26 Murray Street, and on November 1, 1897, were incorporated under the laws of the State of New York. On January 1, 1899, the New York office of P. & F. Corbin was placed in charge of William Bishop, who formerly was with Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co. The New York warehouse of P. & F. Corbin is now located at 11, 13, and 15 Murray Street, and has charge of a very large section of territory, including all foreign business, and the responsibility of the management of this office is large, and Mr. Bishop has shown himself, by his energetic policy and the popularity with which he is regarded by the trade, as the right man in the right place — the master of the situation.



PHILADELPHIA SALESMEN

P. & F. CORBIN, PHILADELPHIA.

The Philadelphia sales rooms of P. & F. Corbin are located at 525 Market Street, in the heart of the business center of the city, and within a mile of seven-eighths of the local hardware dealers. It is within four blocks of the city hall, two squares from the Philadelphia & Reading Railway Station, and a ten minutes' walk from terminal station of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

This branch was established in 1892 by Mr. George S. Corbin, who had formerly been connected with P. & F. Corbin's New York store. At this time he was in ill health, and the detail of the work connected with the inauguration of the new store fell upon Mr. M. S. Wadsworth, a salesman who visited the large cities in Pennsylvania, together with Baltimore and Washington, and thus became naturally associated with the Philadelphia store. The force at that time consisted of manager Geo. S. Corbin, three salesmen, and a stenographer. It was not until a year later that the store was fully stocked with goods, and at this time (July, 1893) the practice of billing Philadelphia sales from the New Britain office was discontinued, the store keeping its own accounts and making its own collections.

In December of 1893, Mr. Wadsworth died, and J. D. Brainerd, the present manager, went to Philadelphia to assist Mr. Corbin, whom he succeeded upon Mr. Corbin's death in 1899. His illness was of very short duration, being congestion of the lungs resulting from a cold.

In July, 1901, the second floor of the building was rented to give room for a larger stock of goods. At this time, and up to January of 1902, P. & F. Corbin had managed the Philadelphia sales of the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co.'s goods in connection with their own, but at this time Mr. E. C. Griswold assumed charge of the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co.'s interests.

The stock of goods carried is large in quantity, and varied in assortment, to answer the needs of the best local trade as well as the demand for cheaper goods, and to supply the jobbers of the territory covered from this point. A full line of the Corbin Screw Corporation's products is also carried in stock and sold. The offices, sample rooms, and warerooms are attractively furnished and completely fitted out with appliances for conducting business in the most approved manner.



CHICAGO SALESMEN

P. & F. CORBIN, CHICAGO, ILL.

The establishment of a sales depot in Chicago was made to better serve the interests of the company's customers in that city and contiguous territory. Prior to the time of the formal opening of a Western branch store, a sample room had been fitted out for Mr. W. G. Miller, the representative in Chicago and the Northwest, and finding that this departure brought an increased trade and a more intimate acquaintance with the goods on the part of the Chicago architects and dealers, it was decided to provide increased facilities for local representation. Accordingly, in September, 1887, the store room at No. 63 East Washington Street was leased, an enlarged sample room with a suitable office was equipped, and a stock of staple goods for local needs was provided. Mr. John R. Scott (now deceased) was engaged to assist Mr. Miller in the management. In 1889, Mr. H. C. M. Thomson succeeded both these gentlemen, and assumed the management of the branch.

From the beginning, the business at the Chicago store showed a steady increase. At first, its operations were confined to the city of Chicago, but, in 1889, its field was enlarged by the addition of a number of contiguous cities directly tributary to Chicago.

In 1894, the present quarters at Nos. 104-106 Lake Street were leased and an outfit was provided commensurate with the importance of the interests represented.

The stock of goods has grown with the needs of the territory, and includes practically everything in the way of Corbin goods needed for buildings of all kinds.

In 1889, Mr. W. C. Stephens was engaged to take charge of the city sales, and in 1901 succeeded Mr. Thomson in the management of the store. Mr. Stephens is aggressive in policy and thorough in his methods, and admirably fitted for carrying out the Corbin policy for the extension of the business.

In many important respects, the Chicago store and its field differ from those of the other branches. Its distance from the main office throws its management more upon its own resources and necessitates the carrying of a more extended line of samples and of stock from which to fill orders. A corps of jobbing salesmen is employed, and territory regularly and carefully covered.

The American Hardware Corporation.

Officers.

President,

Philip Corbin,

First Vice-President,

Charles M. Jarvis.

Second Vice-President,

Howard S. Hart.

Treasurer,

Andrew J. Sloper.

Assistant Treasurer,

Charles H. Parsons.

Secretary,

Charles E. Wetmore.

Assistant Secretary,

Charles B. Parsons.

Directors.

Philip Corbin,
Andrew Corbin,
Charles M. Jarvis,
Andrew J. Sloper,
Charles H. Parsons,
Charles Glover,
Howard S. Hart,
Sylvester C. Dunham,
Frederick P. Wilcox.

P. & F. Corbin.

Officers.

President,
Philip Corbin.

First Vice-President,
Andrew Corbin.

Second Vice-President,
Charles H. Parsons.

Treasurer,
Charles E. Wetmore.

Assistant Treasurer,
Edward L. Prior.

Secretary,
Albert N. Abbe.

Assistant Secretary,
Willis H. De Wolfe.

Directors.

Philip Corbin,
Andrew Corbin,
John B. Talcott,
Charles G. Miller,
Charles H. Parsons,
Charles Glover,
Charles E. Wetmore,
Charles M. Jarvis,
Albert N. Abbe.

Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Co.

Officers.

President,
Howard S. Hart.

Vice-President,
Benjamin A. Hawley.

Treasurer,
Isaac D. Russell.

Assistant Treasurer,
Joel H. Van Newkirk.

Secretary,
Theodore E. Smith.

Directors.

Andrew J. Sloper,
Frank L. Hungerford,
Charles E. Mitchell,
Howard S. Hart,
Benjamin A. Hawley,
Isaac D. Russell,
Theodore E. Smith,
Clarence A. Earl,
Joel H. Van Newkirk.

The Corbin Screw Corporation.

Officers.

President.
Charles Glover.

Vice-President,
Clarence A. Earl.

Treasurer and Secretary,
Theodore E. Smith.

Assistant Secretary,
William J. Surre.

Directors.

Philip Corbin,
Charles M. Jarvis,
Charles Glover,
Howard S. Hart,
Theodore E. Smith,
Charles H. Parsons,
Benjamin A. Hawley,
Clarence A. Earl,
Andrew Corbin.

Corbin Cabinet Lock Co.

Officers.

President and Treasurer,
Philip Corbin.

First Vice-President,
Andrew Corbin.

Second Vice-President,
Charles M. Jarvis.

Secretary,
George W. Corbin.

Directors.

Philip Corbin,
Andrew Corbin,
George W. Corbin,
Albert F. Corbin,
Charles M. Jarvis,
Charles Glover,
Darius Miller,
John B. Talcott,
Charles G. Miller.

The Corbin Motor Vehicle Corporation.

Officers.

President,
Philip Corbin.

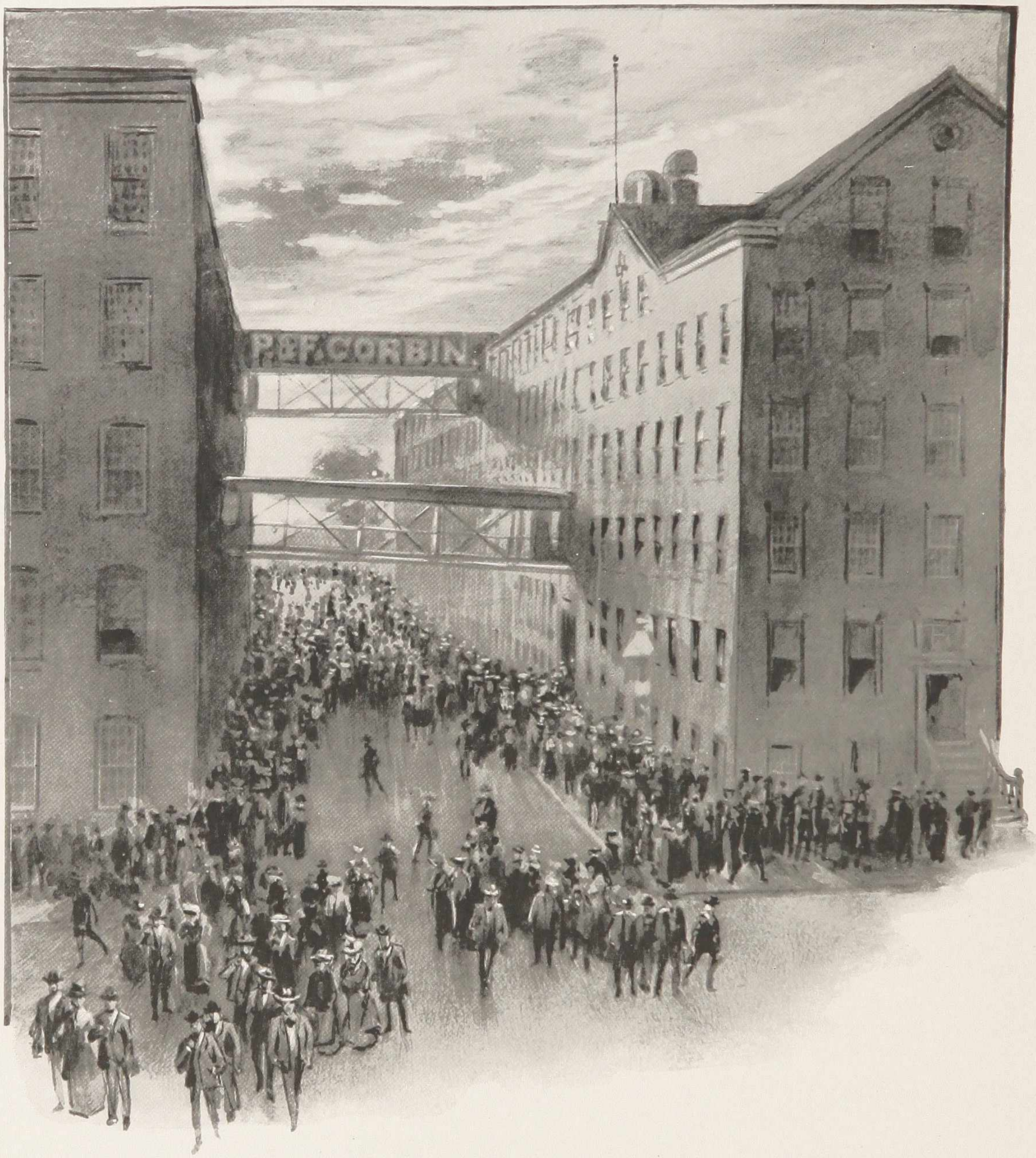
Vice-President,
Charles M. Jarvis.

Treasurer,
Howard S. Hart.

Secretary and Assistant Treasurer,
Paul P. Wilcox.

Directors.

Philip Corbin,
Charles M. Jarvis,
Howard S. Hart,
Charles Glover,
Paul P. Wilcox,
Epaphroditus Peck,
Andrew J. Sloper,
Robert C. Mitchell,
Frederick N. Manross.



THE DAY'S WORK DONE

CORBIN

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